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A THERAPEUTIC SOCIAL PRACTICE OF ART: AESTHETICS AS A TOOL FOR

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IN AN INCARCERATED SETTING

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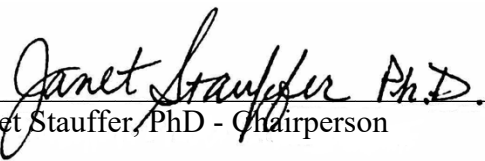
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by

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I hereby attest that all work contained herein is representative of original work and that all material drawn from other sources is appropriately cited.

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Tyler J. Parry

To the holy ones for the Holy One

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INTRODUCTION

My exploration of how art can be incorporated into the pastoral care of incarcerated trauma survivors along with my later reflection on *why* art seemed to be such an effective tool, often contributing to healing and recovery, began with a seemingly offhanded comment. I had been meeting with Jaryd for several weeks, and though we had made some progress, had established some rapport, and Jaryd had expressed satisfaction with the social engagement and experience of our conversations, there seemed to be a barrier, an impediment of some kind, that was preventing us from journeying further towards healing. I was, admittedly, at a loss; I was unsure of how to move forward and unsure of my own capacity to provide the kind of pastoral care that I believed Jaryd deserved. [1]

Jaryd had been incarcerated for seven years prior to his transfer to my facility. During those seven years hr had maintained pastoral relationships with a number of chaplains, one of which had lasted several years. Reflecting on that particular relationship, Jaryd described a dynamic similar to what was at work in our relationship: it was the source of pleasant and engaging conversation, but the relief and healing that he was looking for had not been realized. Thoughts of suicide and self-harm were his constant companion, and he continually experienced what he described as "an evil heaviness," a malignant weight that pressed upon him (JK, personal communication, June 16, 2017). Recognizing that the desire to move forward into something more, and in my mind more helpful, may well have been a product of my own anxiety and may not have been shared by Jaryd, I decided to address it with him. Not wanting to delegitimize the connection that we had established and concerned that diminishing the work that

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[1] This is not to diminish the value of pleasant conversation and healthy social interaction inside of a prison. Many, perhaps most, incarcerated persons have very few opportunities for such engagement, and providing that can be a precious gift offered by a chaplain, but in this case there was a mutual desire to do the work and achieve Jaryd's goals of growth and healing.

he had done would discourage him from pursuing the very therapeutic relationship I was hoping to foster, I determined that an indirect approach might prove more fruitful.

As I pondered how best to engage in this indirect approach, I was reminded of some wisdom expressed by Soren Kierkegaard (1992) through his pseudonym Johannes Climacus. Kierkegaard contended that subjective truth could only be communicated directly and must be experienced in order to be embraced. Parables and other stories were the perfect vehicle accomplishing that goal. Rather than addressing my concern with Jaryd directly, I would find a story that we might jointly engage and learn from. I recalled a short story that I felt might resonate with Jaryd; written by H. P. Lovecraft, "The Outsider" was a story of fear and discovery. After sketching the backstory, I shared with him a quote: "At last I resolved to scale that tower, fall though I might; since it were better to glimpse the sky and perish, than to live without ever beholding day (n.d., p. 110).

Jaryd reacted strongly, both recognizing the quote and embracing the sentiment. "That's it, chaplain. I'm tired of where I am and I need to climb. It might be dangerous. It might be scary, but I need to 'glimpse the sky'" (JK, personal communication, June 30, 2017). We continued to discuss this and the journey the narrator experienced. I was able to find a public domain edition of the story and printed it out. As Jaryd took hold of it, his eyes grew large as he read the opening paragraph.

> Unhappy is he to whom the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness. Wretched is he who looks back upon lone hours in vast and dismal chambers with brown hangings and maddening rows of antique books, or upon awed watches in twilight groves of grotesque, gigantic, and vine-encumbered trees that silently wave twisted branches far aloft. Such a lot the gods gave to me – to me, the

dazed, the disappointed; the barren, the broken. And yet I am strangely content,

and cling desperately to those sere memories, when my mind momentarily

threatens to reach beyond to *the other* (Lovecraft, n.d., pp. 109).

In those words, Jaryd recognized himself, felt himself described, and perhaps for the first time experienced a sense of being understood. Even the concluding sentence offered Jaryd a reality he could be at peace with, a goal he could work towards, and the motivation to make the effort to achieve it. I encouraged him to read through the rest of the story as homework, so we could discuss it during our next session. He almost leapt from his chair, eagerly shook my hand, and rushed on his way, energized in a way I had not seen before.

That next session was filled with promising conversation and was permeated by a sense of the Holy. Jaryd's copy of the story was filled with notes, underlined and circled passages, and questions he wanted to discuss. Highlighted towards the end of the story was a statement, simple but profound for him:

But in the cosmos there is balm as well as bitterness, and that balm is nepenthe. In

the supreme horror of that second I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of

black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images (Lovecraft, n.d., p. 112,

italics added).

For Jaryd, theretofore, the cosmos held only bitterness; no balm was to be had. However, if the narrator, who had experienced such great horror, could recognize good in the world and hope in his life, then surely, Jaryd now felt, hope and healing could be found in his life as well. Jaryd, too, held "black memories" in his being, and the hope that they could vanish or simply be banished for a time energized him to do the hard work of trauma recovery (JK, personal communication, July 7, 2017).

Jaryd's experience with "The Outsider," was transformative, but it was not a panacea, healing all of his ills. There was a journey ahead, setbacks to be experienced, and wholeness to be found. Lovecraft's story had proven to be powerful, providing a space for healing conversation, and infusing Jaryd with an encouraging energy, perhaps the motivation he needed to do the hard work of trauma healing. The experience was a great encouragement to me as well, leading to a deluge of questions about how art might be incorporated into therapeutic relationships. How could I, as a prison chaplain, bring art into the counseling office? What hope did that offer for others? What challenges might it pose? Why is it that art seems such a helpful and healing tool? What is happening when someone experiences art, not simply in a surface way that appreciates its aesthetic value, but in a deep, profound, and transformative way?

The fruit of that reflection, and subsequent research, can be found in this book. Here I will attempt to provide an answer to some of those more philosophical questions: how should we understand the experience of art, specifically when it is engaged for the purpose of healing? I will develop an understanding of dialogical or intersubjective aesthetics, an aesthetic framework if you will, that centers on authentic meeting and personal engagement. I will also offer a way of conceptualizing a *therapeutic social practice* of art that results not only in an experience, but in a new language, a *theopoetics* of healing.[2] Having laid this philosophical foundation, we will consider four case studies, all of which are examples of how incarcerated persons therapeutically engaged with different works of art, engagement that played an important role in their healing from trauma. In light of those case studies, and through the lens of the aesthetic framework, we will consider what was happening with the trauma survivor, the caregiver, and their shared work. This, it is my hope, will allow chaplains and other caregivers to develop practices to most

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[2] As will be seen, theopoetics forms a major element in the therapeutic social practice of art and in this work. For an outline of what I mean by theopoetics in this context, see **Appendix A**.

effectively incorporate art into their work. Suggestions to that effect will be offered in the final chapter.

Before engaging in all of those tasks, however, it is helpful to analyze the particular context in which this task takes place: the prison. This is not to say that the analysis and suggestions offered here are exclusively applicable to prison ministry; it can be adapted in whole or in part to many other contexts. The value of utilizing the incarcerated environment, is that it surfaces in a vivid way the reality that those with whom I worked were not only the survivors of past traumas, but were living in a place that was actively traumatizing them. This is a reality that exists in far more places than prison: people throughout the world are wrestling with past traumas while sustaining the trauma of their present context. Persons live with the hurt of historical trauma all around us. Underlying this entire project is the question: how can I help to facilitate healing even as wounds are continually reopened and new harm is done? The challenge is indeed great, but my hope is that through this project the hope within every caregiver will be encouraged and enlivened and blossom forth into a force equal to the task.

Chapter I: The Incarcerated Environment

Figure 1

Prisoners' Round (after Gustave Doré)

Note: Adapted from Vincent van Gogh, Public Domain,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_Willem_van_Gogh_037.jpg#/media/File:Vincent_Willem_van_Gogh_037.jpg

Prisons are objects of great fascination, the subject of manifold books, movies, and television series. Some of that art, such as van Gogh's *Prisoners' Round* (see Figure 1), were created by a person presently held in something akin to captivity, but a majority is a product of nonincarcerated imagination.[3] To rely on such media sources for curate information on the reality of prison life, prison culture, the incarcerated community, or incarcerated persons, would be unwise, though we shall see that it does hold great power. For an individual working in an incarcerated setting, an understanding of the context or environment of that work is hugely important. How, then, to proceed?

The assumption of this chapter is that the voices and stories of the incarcerated hold the key to understanding the reality of their environment. Any attempt to seek justice or love one's incarcerated neighbor that refuses to hear, and hear in its fullest vulgarity and violence, the voice of the incarcerated will fall short. Such an attempt will, at best, face assault by diverse challenges born of ignorance, or, at worst, shipwreck on one's privileged, often imperialistic, biases. A plethora of lenses can focus on those words and narratives, four of which are presented here: the lenses of relational studies, trauma, restorative justice and peacebuilding, and theology.

For the purposes of this chapter and this book as a whole, I will draw on my experiences in and tell stories from persons incarcerated in the male prison by which I am employed.[4] I will use pseudonyms to protect their privacy. These stories are necessarily local and particular, but I selected them because they speak to broader themes, themes elucidated and enlightened by the lenses used to examine them. What emerges is a broiling, complex, and challenging vision of the incarcerated environment, with an eye on what it means to live as an incarcerated person.

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[3] Van Gogh painted this work while Saint-Paul-de-Mausole Asylum.
[4] "Male" prisons may house cisgender men, transgender men, and transgender women.

The Lens of Relational Studies

Joshua A. walked into my office a frightened and apprehensive young man. He came because his cellmate had encouraged him to do so. "Talk to the chaplain," he said, "he's a good guy." That was the only endorsement Joshua needed to initiate the meeting, but it was clear at the outset that merely arriving at my door was an act of courage. Joshua is young, in his late twenties, tall and well-built. He clearly pays attention to his looks and probably spends most of the money he earns as a block laundry worker on cosmetics to maintain his appearance. His voice is higher pitched than one might expect, and the manner in which he holds his hands and head evince both gracefulness and apprehension.

After a few introductory comments and a shared chuckle, born more of discomfort than legitimate humor, Joshua began to calm and soon was sharing his story. Born in a conservative Christian home, first homeschooled and then attending a Christian high school, it had become evident to him early in high school that he was attracted to other males. Joshua took the brave step of informing his parents, whom he knew would disapprove. His parents took him to the pastor of their church, and so began a long and painful season. After rough and confrontational treatment by the pastor and elders of the church, Joshua endured years of individual and group therapy, participating in programs run by Exodus International, including regional and national events. Joshua says, "I sincerely tried to change who I was, who I am, but it quickly became obvious that I was just trying to change my behavior, not who I loved and was attracted to, and that really hurt" (J. A, personal communication, April 16, 2018). Joshua experienced strong symptoms of depression and suicidality was a constant companion.

Enduring until his sophomore year at a Bible college, Joshua eventually found his own agency by rejecting his church, his school, and his family. He took a job as a bartender, and

joined actively the "homosexual underground" in his community. Engaging in multiple sexual encounters and relationships, often several within a single night and with anonymous men, Joshua initially felt liberated. However, this changed after a night in which he engaged in sexual relations with three men he anonymously found on Craigslist. "My friend came to me and said, 'You're going to get hurt or you're going to get killed doing that shit,' and he was right," Joshua relates (J. A, personal communication, April 2, 2018).

During this season, Joshua began to drink to excess on a regular basis and was experimenting with narcotics and prescription medication. This reached its apex one night when, while driving under the influence of alcohol and other substances, he struck and killed two motorists. Joshua has no memory of the event, but will frequently construct scenarios within his own mind about "what might have happened." "I am afraid," he says, "that I was some kind of asshole and now those families don't have their loved ones" (J. A, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Joshua continues to serve out his 7- to 10-year sentence. His previous cellmate paroled, but Joshua has been able to successfully integrate into a subcommunity within the prison and has developed a number of healthy relationships. He has navigated the process of finding a new cellmate, and is engaged in educational programming that will help him to find employment upon release.

The story of Joshua illustrates a number of elements that can be understood about the incarcerated environment, when examined through the lens of relationship or relational studies. These factors provide touchpoints both for theological reflection and pastoral intervention. The first pair of these factors are important to surface and reflect upon at the outset of any examination of incarcerated persons or the communities they form. As staff members, chaplains

stand in a privileged position. The incarcerated environment brings this into sharp relief. Within the prison, a staff member can issue orders and hold power to punish inmates if they fail to comply. An individual's chances at parole can be put severely at risk simply by the written statement of a staff member. This creates a power dynamic which must be understood and navigated (Nouwen, McNeill, & Morrison, 1982).

The Christian doctrine of Incarnation can be helpful at this touchpoint. Without delving into finer points of theology, the broad sweep of the Christian narrative includes the concept that the Divine "took on human flesh" in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth and lived on the physical earth in relation with physical human beings. Furthermore, traditional Christians would argue that this happens historically in a way substantively, ontologically, and theologically different than God had acted in history theretofore, or hence. Reflecting on this, Henri Nouwen et al writes,

> The great mystery revealed to us in this is that Jesus, who is the
> sinless son of God, chose in total freedom to suffer fully our pains
> and thus to let us discover the true nature of our own passions. In
> him, we see and experience the persons we truly are. Jesus who is
> divine lives our broken humanity not as a curse (Gn 3:14-19), but
> as a blessing. His divine compassion makes it possible for us to
> face our sinful selves, because it transforms our broken human
> condition from a cause of despair into a source of hope (Nouwen et
> al., 1982, p. 15).

Nouwen helpfully observes that not only is the Incarnation, for Christians, an act of divine self-disclosure, but also a means of elevating all of creation. In and through the

Incarnation, "we see and experience the persons we truly are," and this can be easily extended to the natural world and all of creation (Nouwen et al., 1982, p. 15).

In an incarcerated environment, to see and experience can be significant. By its very nature, incarceration dehumanizes and degrades–continually so–and those living, moving, and having their being in that environment can easily fall into a self-understanding shaped by those elements. The doctrine of the Incarnation is a helpful corrective, and in Joshua's case this was two-fold. As a homosexual male who had constantly been taught that his sexuality and physicality was an "abomination," to experience affirmation in his body and being had a transformative effect. This is no less true for all persons behind bars.

Inherent in the theology of Incarnation is the important task of creating authentic relationships of solidarity, in which a sense of compassion and the presence of the Holy can begin to come to light. Relationships in an incarcerated environment are challenging at best, beset by exploitation, violence, fear, isolation, and machismo. For someone like Joshua, it meant receding from the relational matrix within the prison and developing a façade that he could present to those all around him. Authenticity, transparency, and non-exploitive connection are in rare supply in an incarcerated context.[5] The deep and pervasive impact of this reality can be seen most clearly through the lens of relational studies. Authenticity, so fundamental to the theological anthropology of Martin Buber, and necessary for real becoming, must be cultivated within environments mutually created by chaplains and incarcerated people (Buber, 1988). This may not come naturally but can be facilitated by the willingness of staff to stand in solidarity with those incarcerated people whom they serve (Nouwen et al., 1982).[6] It is an act of

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[5] This is true for relationships between incarcerated people and staff. Inmates manipulate staff while staff exploits them. Relationships between incarcerated people take on a sharper edge, but maintain the same dynamics.
[6] Admittedly this solidarity has limits, with boundaries determined by the status of staff member and inmate.

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compassion that, because it is so unique within a prison, can be easily observed by members of the incarcerated community (Nouwen et al., 1982). The third other of the Divine can permeate that space once the relational framework of compassion and solidarity, expressed authentically and non-exploitively, is in place (Buber, 1988).

Again, the story of Joshua is illustrative. Grounded in his history of abuse and rejection at the hand of religious professionals, Joshua was reticent to bring his authentic self into the presence of a chaplain. This was exacerbated by the level of hiding and misdirection he felt forced to engage in regularly on the block. Joshua needed affirmation; he needed to know that he would not be rejected by God or, in his way of thinking, God's representatives on earth. Within that context of acceptance and authentic being, the presence of the Divine became a new, yet old, experience for Joshua. His journey towards reconnecting with God began and was sustained in the relational environment envisioned and encouraged by Nouwen and Buber.

The Lens of Trauma Studies

Teddy B. said it was his birthday. When asked how old he was, Teddy said, "I am twenty and thirty, twenty on the streets and thirty down" (T. B., personal communication, February 13, 2017). Teddy was nineteen years old when he committed a crime that came with a mandatory sentence of life without parole. Initially panicked, Teddy was able to escape from the county jail he was held at, earning him the label of "escape risk" for the rest of his life, a label that meant greater scrutiny and limited privileges. Never will Teddy enjoy some of the small benefits afforded to other lifers, little things that can make a significant difference for those adjusting to the reality that they will spend their life and final days within a prison.[7]

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[7] Some of these small benefits include the bottom bunk of a cell, priority in commissary line, or a general sense of respect from staff that is often absent in their interaction with other incarcerated persons.

Teddy has limited intellectual capacity, a kind heart, and a joy-filled spirit. He is

constantly humming, singing, or chatting away with anyone who will listen. His smile is almost

omnipresent and he has a capacity to reframe even the most dehumanizing and painful aspects of

incarceration with a gentle look and shrug. When asked about his incarceration, Teddy says, "I

wasn't arrested; I was saved. I put that needle in my arm for the first time the day of my crime,

and I know if I stayed out on the streets, I'd be dead." He continues, "I'm very sorry that

someone died, and I think about that every day. I was so scared, Chap, and I didn't mean to do it,

and there was so much blood…so much blood. I think about that every day, Chap, and I can see

the blood and I can smell it and it makes me sad" (T. B., personal communication, February 6,

2017).

Teddy's story provides helpful insight into the incarcerated experience and environment

through the lens of trauma. Many significant parallels can be drawn between the trauma induced

by captivity, the tactics used by a perpetrator, the trauma induced by incarceration, and the

tactics used by the Department of Corrections. Staff exercise coercive control over inmates, even

"exercising despotic control over every aspect of the victim's [inmate's] life" (Herman, 2015, pp.

74-75). Staff systematically disempower and disconnect inmates in order to establish and

maintain control. Herman's statement is an accurate description of the prison environment:

"Fear is also increased by inconsistent and unpredictable outbursts of violence and by capricious

enforcement of petty rules" (Herman, 2015, p. 77). Autonomy is destroyed and inmates are told

what to eat, when to sleep, and what to wear, establishing a dependency on the department.

Many who enter into an incarcerated state do so as survivors of trauma themselves.

Teddy had suffered repeated abuse at the hands of his "friends" during childhood, and the

participation-induced trauma described by Yoder is evident in his statement above (Yoder,

2015). A majority of incarcerated people are people of color who come from impoverished communities (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 2018). They evidence societal and historical abuse, often falling into the narratives described by Yoder as "good vs. evil" and desiring "redemptive violence" (Yoder, 2015, p. 40-41).

Teddy, however, provides a hopeful vision of the capacity to make choices, create meaning, and focus on love, faith, and beauty while incarcerated. Teddy has suffered abuse and he endures suffering, but consistently makes a choice to create meaning in the face of that suffering (Frankl, 2006). Teddy does not allow that abuse or his environment to define his meaning but locates his meaning in the narrative of his life, and specifically how that narrative can join with the narrative of God's people in the world. He reframes his incarceration as a story of redemption, and therein finds significant meaning (Frankl, 2006). Teddy consistently demonstrates a reality Frankl describes in concentration camps but can be found in prisons throughout the United States: a focus on what is good, beautiful, and lovely. The simple beauties, so often overlooked or taken for granted by those who are not incarcerated, captivate Teddy. The sight of a leaf falling from a tree, the rays of the sun bursting over a mountain, or the crunch of snow underfoot all call forth within Teddy a feeling of appreciation and beauty.

Closely related to this appreciation is the observation that Teddy cultivates few, but deep, relationships, both with those on the inside and those outside. Teddy maintains communication with only a few people outside of the prison, but he loves them deeply and courageously (T. B., personal communication, April 26, 2017). Likewise, the capacity to develop deep, lasting, and loving relationships within the prison is not widespread, but those friendships that do develop hold immensely strong connection.

This is true for Teddy's relationships with staff. He says, "I like that you take the time to listen to me, that you know about me, and that you can listen to me talk without writing things down for a report or something" (T. B., personal communication, April 26, 2017). This speaks to the importance of authentic witness for survivors of trauma (Herman, 2015). Teddy feels seen, heard, and known, a reality generally uncommon in an incarcerated setting.[8] He feels valued as a person and finds that his needs are met when another chooses to hear his story not for the purpose of some particular task, but for the purpose of learning about him, hearing and see him, and walking with him through his trauma to a place of healing.

The Lens of Peacebuilding

Miguel C. and Antonio D. were cellmates who could not be more different. Miguel was small and loud and outgoing, a natural connector and enduringly positive. He was the "mayor" of the prison, bonding with fellow incarcerated persons and staff alike. Antonio was an introvert: tall, imposing, and intense. He might not say more than a few dozen words a day unless engaged. He didn't have friends. "I don't have time for that shit, these motherfuckers aren't my friends," he would say (A. D., personal communication, June 15, 2017). Their lives would soon lead in differing directions.

Miguel, the outgoing and happy-go-lucky fellow was a natural selection for a special program run by the jail. Aggrieved by the selection, another incarcerated man, a gang member of significant influence, confronted him. Miguel attempted to disengage but was struck forcefully. Following appropriate protocol, Miguel reported the assault to staff. Perceiving him to be a "snitch," friends and fellow members of the initial assailant attacked Miguel. Fracturing his skull and breaking both a leg and an arm, Miguel was hospitalized for an extended period of time

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[8] Prison culture, and the "code" that inmates generally follow works against acting as a "witness" in almost any sense of the term.

and assigned to protective custody, based on the "hit" that remained outstanding on him. Visiting him in the infirmary he said, "the Most High does not want me to use violence, but sometimes you just have to. I guess his rules don't apply here" (M. C., personal communication, December 24, 2017).

Antonio, left without a cellmate after Miguel's tragedy, had to endure the challenge of "breaking in a new cellie" (A. D., personal communication, June 15, 2017). The first gentleman assigned to the task posed concerns for him. A convicted sex offender, the new cellmate refused to abide by the boundaries Antonio wanted to establish and maintain, including appropriate noise levels and cleanliness. Things came to a head when Antonio found his new cellmate stealing his typing paper, an important item for someone dedicated to their legal appeal. "I walk in and this motherfucker is taking my shit, and he looks at me like it's his fucking right to rape my ass right in front of me. That shit can't be tolerated, so I told him big boy rules now applied" (A. D., personal communication, July 9, 2017). Antonio demonstrated restraint, until the next day.

Walking down the tier, Antonio passed his new cellmate, who made a remark to the man next to him, saying Antonio was now "his bitch" because "that pussy can't do shit to this nigga." Antonio returned to his cell and waited. When his new cellmate arrived, Antonio threw a punch, rendering the other man unconscious. "You going to play big boy rules, and you pull that shit. I'm going to hurt you, life-fucking-changingly, and walk away with a big fucking grin" (A. D., personal communication, June 15, 2018). Unobserved and unrecorded, the assault did not lead to charges or discipline for either man.

These two men demonstrate strongly different personalities and opinions about peace and violence, and their contrast serves to demonstrate the challenge of peacebuilding within an incarcerated environment. Physical violence and conflict is a reality within prisons. Conflict is

assumed as a necessary component to the relational dynamics (Lederach, 2005). As Lederach (2003) insightfully describes, peacebuilding often takes place within a traumatizing, conflict-defined space. That is certainly the case in an incarcerated environment. Furthermore, as seen in the stories above, prison culture often rewards violence and punishes those who follow the rules. For Miguel, the movement away from violence and towards peace resulted in a greater level of damage and injury. In many ways, it is a self-perpetuating cycle that, in the initial stages of peacebuilding, might grow more violent. Endemic violence and structures designed to contain or even leverage that internal violence create a framework that any pre-peacemaking analysis must take into account (Lederach, 2003).

The recognition that structures implemented within prisons are not aimed at eliminating, but rather managing and utilizing violence is important both in terms of understanding the environment and culture of a prison and appreciating the reality with which any staff member, such as a chaplain, must contend. Staff are situated within the relational matrix of the prison, and that position contributes to violence, both directly and indirectly. Lederach (2005), in his *Moral Imagination*, contends that the beginning of a peacebuilding work is a recognition of that situatedness with the other. Anyone who seeks to enter into that environment must do internal work, recognizing not only privilege and power, but also manifold ways in which presence may contribute to violence or injustice.

When speaking with Antonio following the events described above, he reacted incredulously to the suggestion that nonviolent means may have accomplished his purpose. "Sometimes," he said, "you've got to whip someone's ass." He continues, "There's us convicts and them [referring to staff]. We don't bring you into our shit, when we can handle it ourselves. If I did, I'd be a bitch, and I'm no fucking bitch; I've got the swinging dick on the block, and

motherfuckers got to know that" (A. D., personal communication, May 25, 2018). This language

suggests significant polarities at work within Antonio's understanding of the prison culture.

There are those with power and those without power, those who understand the rules and those

who do not, and there are those who live in the prison and those who simply work there. Moral

imagination must find ways to overcome this prevalent, dualistically polar, thinking.

The Lens of Restorative Justice

Joshua also shared another moving story. After accepting a plea deal, the day came for

his sentencing. Sitting in the courtroom, he knew that he was going to hear from the families of

those who died because of his criminal choice. He was deathly afraid, pale, and perspiring. The

first to speak was a large, bearded, tattooed man. He stood, looked at Joshua and said that his

initial intent was to "destroy you" emotionally, but standing in that moment he could not do that.

"All I see," he said, "is a scared young man who made a stupid choice, a choice that just about

everyone here has made." The emotional release of that moment is hard to overestimate, as two

other family members stood up to offer Joshua forgiveness. In reflection, Joshua stated, "I don't

know if I could have made it without that" (J. A., personal communication, November 5, 2018).

Zehr (2015) envisions the task of restorative justice in terms of needs: the needs of

victims, offenders, and the community at large. Fundamental to this program is listening,

hearing, and seeing the stories and realities of all stakeholders (Zehr, 2015). Joshua's story

demonstrates the power of merely seeing, and in speaking their truth Joshua felt connected with

them, their pain and loss. Joshua is wrestling with the question of whether to communicate with

the victim's family through a Department of Corrections approved program; he feels that if

justice is to be accomplished, then further communication and amends must be made (J. A.,

personal communication, November 5, 2018). What Joshua senses intuitively, Zehr expresses

concretely. There must be a setting to rights, with consideration for the needs of all parties involved.

Prison culture, however, works against some of these goals. A thorough understanding of that environment will allow those working for restorative justice to do so more effectively and avoid inflicting unnecessary harm. For incarcerated people to hear the story of victims, victim awareness in Department of Corrections jargon, is important, but dangerous. Offenders run the risk of being re-traumatized (Yoder, 2015). Hearing the story of victims can be highly emotional experiences, especially when the victim is a child. These heightened emotions can impact the safety of certain incarcerated people. Certain categories of offenders tend to benefit more than others when it comes to hearing the stories of victims. Appreciating not only individual stories, but also institutional cultures and population dynamics is critical.

The guiding metaphor one uses in understanding crime can have a tremendous influence on how one perceives and relates to, those who are in prison. Fundamental to most, if not all, understanding of crimes is the violation of rights or justice: someone did something wrong (Zehr, 2015). However, in understanding whose rights have been violated or in what sense justice has been betrayed, metaphors necessarily come into play. Historically, crime was seen as an act of war against the person of the monarch. Justice, then, was administered by the military in ways that had the appearance of acts of war, namely torture (Foucault, 1995). Moving forward in history, crime was seen to be an act against "the people," "the state," or individuals. From the lens of restorative justice, more personalized metaphors serve more effectively to surface the needs and obligations in play (Zehr, 2015). It is not necessary to be confined to a single metaphor but understanding crime as an act against persons or "a people," seems fruitful,

recognizing that, for example, hate crimes are not simply committed against a person but a category in the same way that crimes against women affect all women (Baker-Fletcher, 2006).

The Lens of Theology

Mary G. is a middle-aged transgender woman with a heartbreaking story and an iron will. Her history of abuse began well before her incarceration. She has been silenced, violated, and assaulted, both "outside" and within prison walls. She has numbed herself with substances and pursued peace with extraordinary vigor. She has been marginalized throughout her life and has, in many moments, sought to silence herself and disappear. She has been isolated, alienated, and abandoned. She has known suffering.

Mary recently said, "I love the chapel. It's the only place I can come to and feel ok with who I am, that people aren't leering at me or hating me or judging me" (M. G., personal communication, March 12, 2017). Mary here speaks to one goal that the Religious Services Department of every prison seeks to achieve: to establish a space within an incarcerated community that is defined by acceptance, love, and diversity. To use the language of Pamela Cooper-White (2011), to provide a place that reflects the divine multiplicity (p. 11). The lens of theology is far too broad to bring fruitfully to bear on the incarcerated environment within this chapter. To refine that lens by limiting it to how an understanding of the Holy colors and shapes an understanding of the incarcerated community not only brings greater clarity but also fruitful soil for practical and theological growth. Thus, the view of God as multiple, as articulated by Cooper-White, can inform and shape the inherent diversity of a prison chapel program.[9]

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[9] While a nuanced and thick concept, the assertion embraced here is that a theology that emphasizes the oneness of the Divine will inherently shape a hierarchical community that "perpetuates stratification and oppression" (Cooper-White, 2011, p. 4). A view that sees the Holy in trinitarian terms, as an egalitarian and ever-developing community, will naturally support a dynamic community that reflects that diversity.

For many incarcerated persons and staff, prison is the most diverse community they have ever encountered. Prison draws people, necessarily, from all walks of life and all corners of a state, region, or country.[10] Incarcerated persons have limited agency when it comes to choosing their neighbors, and categories that might hold influence on the outside, such as age, ethnic background, religion, or LGBTQ+ status, are not considered.[11] The first experience of people from significantly different backgrounds occurs, for many, for the first time in prison. The religious diversity within an incarcerated community can be breathtaking.[12] Questions of unity and diversity naturally come to the forefront. A vision of the Divine that allows space for such diversity while still maintaining a non-patriarchal, non-imperialist unity can be a great benefit to the incarcerated community.

The chapel community is a subculture that brings together many other subcultures within a prison. Naturally, incarcerated people manage levels of discomfort and fear by connecting with those who look, sound, and believe like they do. Thus, outside of the chapel community, prisons can become exceptionally segregated environments. The Religious Services Department can work against this, creating within the prison a new community, grounded in a politics of justice and compassion (Brueggemann, 2018). This community can be an independent *polis*, speaking prophetically to the larger community (Bader-Saye, 2005). Appreciating that the edges of such communities will include tension and movement is helpful in analyzing, assessing, and understanding an incarcerated community.

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[10] This is not to discredit the notion presented above that a disproportionate number people of color or people of lower socioeconomic statuses are overrepresented behind prison walls.
[11] The exception to this is a sensitivity to the needs and wants of transgender persons.
[12] The question of how many religious traditions are found within a prison community can be tricky to parse. However, a typical Religious Services Department will accommodate at least a dozen religious communities.

Prisons are places of suffering: physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually, and within almost any other domain one could offer. This is especially true for individuals such as Mary, who reside within an excluded or hated group within the broader incarcerated community. Employing theology as a lens in examining this reality can be revelatory. The nature of that lens, however, may be sharply determinative. A patriarchal, authoritarian understanding of impassibility, for example, may create a barrier to empathy (Johnson, 2002). A view that embraces divine suffering, however, can help the observer to surface an understanding of human suffering broadly, and incarcerated suffering particularly that can prevent a privileging in the direction, already embraced by most incarcerated people, that to disclose suffering is a sign of weakness or failure (Frankl, 2006).

Specific policies, procedures, and choices made by the prison staff tasked with maintaining order within the incarcerated community contribute to the suffering experienced by inmates. To a certain extent, this is a brute fact, a reality that cannot be avoided, if goals such as safety and security are to be maintained. However, the totalizing, silencing, and numbing effect of such realities parallel to a great extent the politics of empire described by Walter Brueggemann (2018). An incarcerated community is a silenced community. An incarcerated community is a powerless community. An incarcerated community is a numbed community. Recognizing, as Brueggemann does, that the very nature of the Divine works to subvert such structures and realities while also establishing justice, helps chaplains and other staff to find a place within the community, define goals, and appreciate the dynamics at work (Brueggemann, 2018).

Mary's example, once again, is instructive. Her experience of marginalization required a community to counteract it. While a single relationship would surely provide benefit, it was only

once situated within a community of compassion and justice that she found voice and peace. The

Christian concept of the Trinity, with its Eastern emphasis on the *perichoresis*, provides a

winsome fleshing out of the doctrine. It is when one enters into the dance, finds divine partners,

realizes that "earthly partners" are there present, and dances on, that one can find equality,

acceptance, and healing (Baker-Fletcher, 2006).[13]

Toward a Vision of the Incarcerated Environment

Prison environments are ever-evolving relational matrices, influenced even by the

presence of an observer. To describe such an environment is to present as static that which is

perpetually in flux and to confine to the past that which is always in motion towards the future.

To observe the elements of the environment alone does not do justice to this dynamism; one

must consider the interplay between them as well.

It may be helpful to view each lens as adding clarity at a different level, moving from the

internal, through the interpersonal and corporate, to the cosmic. The lens of trauma studies

enlightens the internal dynamics of those who dwell in an incarcerated environment, while the

lens of relational studies clarifies elements of the interaction between incarcerated persons. One

cannot be understood apart from the other, as those relationships provide a space for healing or

continued injury, while the wounds of trauma color every relational interaction.

Likewise, any attempt to understand the corporate, or political, context of incarceration

must take into full consideration the relational dynamics of trauma survivors, both those

incarcerated and within the broader community. The lenses of peacebuilding and restorative

justice help to elucidate that, while also providing a framework for an even broader

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[13] This is not to confine such healing experiences of the Divine to Trinitarian Christian circles, but to offer an example of how theological reflection on the character of the Holy can provide a structure and framework for understanding the incarcerated environments and the needs therein.

understanding, namely how the incarcerated community is situated within the larger community and nation. Theology broadens still further, while simultaneously returning the focus to the individual. *Perichoresis* provides a metaphor by which one can understand all of reality, encompassing far more than human structures, while Incarnation provides clarity for the understanding of particular incarcerated bodies. Thus, there are both tension and movement: in short, a dance.

The four lenses employed in this chapter help to bring those tensions and attractions into focus, finding a *dike eris* of sorts.[14] As the elements align in any particular moment, a snapshot develops, clarified by the lenses one employs. One need not employ all four simultaneously in order to gain that clarity, but to retain each as a tool can help to bring into focus the challenges and the opportunities inherent in the incarcerated world.

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[14] *Dike eris*, or "strife is justice," is one of the hallmarks of Heraclitan ethics, and helpfully describes the space held by motion in tension.

Chapter II: Dialogical Aesthetics

Figure 2

Noah: The Eve of the Deluge

Note: Adapted from Linnell, J. (1848). *Noah: The eve of the deluge* [Oil on canvas]. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH.

There I stood, an undergraduate student taking Art Appreciation 101, forced to walk the halls of the Cleveland Museum of Art, utterly transfixed, despite my previous protestation, by the massive painting before me (see Figure 2). My eyes drew immediately to the horizon, the sense of impending doom and loss, and then just as quickly fixed on the gaze of Noah, knowing and yet not knowing, what lay ahead. It was a moment, existential and spiritual, that was at once active and passive: a moment in which I was actively participating in the work and yet was also acted upon. I stood as one addressed and addressing, and felt a deep connection with Something

both known and unknown, partially revealed and concealed. It was a paradoxical moment of

ultimate subjective existence (Kierkegaard, 1992).

Yet, even in the immediate aftermath of my experience of John Linnell's *Noah: The Eve*

of the Deluge, my capacity to recount or recreate the experience or to recollect the details of the

painting were exceedingly limited. I would come to learn that my ignorance of the work was

greater than my knowledge; I had not even noted noetically what most critics would consider

significant elements of the piece. I had no knowledge that Milton's grand description of the

biblical tale of Noah in *Paradise Lost* had inspired Linnell to create the work; my eyes had not

even registered the line of animals in the midground, making their way to an ark hardly

discernable from the landscape. I knew nothing of Victorian style and even less of the work's

history and provenance (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978).

Yet, the experience of the painting remained. Absent knowledge of the context and even

content of the work, my act of participation was an unalterable brute fact of my human

existence.[1] Should we dismiss the experience as simply an emotive, but ultimately ignorant and

unproductive response, as some deeply immersed in what Nicholas Wolterstorff (2015) terms the

"Grand Narrative" would encourage?[2] Was my experience somehow *illegitimate* because it was

the product neither of training nor, at least in a conscious sense, intentional? If legitimate, should

my experience of Linnell's work be considered a secondary or tertiary act, of less significance or

importance than the informed, experienced, and critical engagement of professionals? The

present thesis answers each of those queries with a resounding "no."

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[1] As we shall see later, it is possible and likely profitable to think of the experience of art as a social brute fact, as opposed to a physical brute fact or brute fact simpliciter (Anscombe, 1958).

[2] While an interesting investigation, the economics of art will not be closely considered, nor how the power of late-stage capitalism has shaped not only the language of art, but how critics consider art itself and one's participation within particular works of art. That said, the influence of late-stage capitalism will be considered in terms of its formative influence on the social practices of art engagement.

The history of aesthetics is replete with examples of great philosophers and theologians who attempted to capture the essence of art, or define the artistic endeavor in a way applicable to art in all its forms.[3] The present thesis is not nearly so grand; in this consideration of art, and specifically of the therapeutic practice of engaging with an artistic language-game, what becomes relevant is not the border, defining and delineating between art and "not-art," but rather the qualitative evaluation of the experiential, dialogical interaction between art participant and artist, and the Other that emerges.[4] In a sense, this thesis radically subjectivizes art, calling into question the validity of boundaries between art and "not-art," in a manner analogous to the question of language and not-language in late Wittgensteinian linguistic philosophy (Hagberg, 1994).[5] Likewise, the question of beauty, which has often been of central concern in aesthetic reflection, and in philosophy far prior to the formalization of aesthetics as a branch of philosophy, has been problematized in contemporary critical reflection (Steiner, 2001; Tate, 2009; Taylor, 2016). [6] Without embracing the entirety of those critiques, the recognition that references to beauty, even those definitions of beauty that avoid the patriarchal problematic of objectivism, surface considerable and legitimate concerns around just how worthwhile such a reference is for the present purpose (Brand, 2000). Beauty, then, will not figure prominently in

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[3] Aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy focused on contemporary understandings of what comprises "art," is a relative newcomer within Western thought, coming to prominence only in recent centuries, compared to logic, epistemology, and metaphysics which can trace their roots to Plato, Aristotle, and a diverse collection of pre-Socratic philosophers. As such, it is subject to the predominant moves within philosophy and thought generally, reflecting attempts to universalize, particularize, and deconstruct (Russell, 1945).

[4] Questions, for example, of the bifurcation of art and craft or which works constitute art and which should be cast aside as "something other than art" often form a significant amount of space in aesthetic conversation, but are not relevant to this present discourse.

[5] For Wittgenstein, asking the question "what is language" is itself absurd, for to answer that question would require escaping the very language-game employed in asking it (Hagberg, 1994). Analogously, it may be argued that the boundary of art is less a matter of form than function, which would introduce a level of elasticity that would render the question itself, if not absurd, then at minimum unhelpful.

[6] These critiques could be broadly categorized as feminist or political critique and philosophical or epistemic critique. A full consideration of such arguments is beyond the present scope of this work.

this thesis, or in the following reflection on the therapeutic practice of participation within works

of art.

The core of the present thesis is a dual consideration of art, both from the position of the

art-participant and the artist, with an additional reflection on what happens or comes to be

between those poles.[7] The experience of participating in a work of art, especially when engaged

therapeutically, is conceived of as a dialogical experience or meeting, an engagement between a

person and an Other, perhaps, but not necessarily, conceived in personal terms.[8] The participant

is not purely passive; the work of art, or the artist by means of her art, does not exclusively act

upon the observer.[9] This act of participation will be considering using the concepts and

categories of Nicholas Wolterstorff, as presented in *Art Rethought: The Social Practices of Art*.

Wolterstorff recognizes the multiplicity of ways in which humans engage with a work of art. The

social practice of participation in art presented here may be termed a *therapeutic* practice insofar

as the primary goal of the practice is to achieve a therapeutic end: growth, insight that leads to

healing, or healing itself.[10] The definition of healing embraced here, and which will be expanded

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[7] While not entirely relevant, the question of appropriate terminology, of what word ought to be used to describe the artistic endeavor, will be a theme throughout. Is it accurate to state that an artist "creates" a work of art, and, if so, in what sense should one understand the term "create"?

[8] Grant Kester (2013) develops a similar concept of dialogical aesthetics that should be distinguished from the model presented here. While there is fundamental agreement, namely that participation in art is a dialogical experience rooted in a relationship between participant and artist, the framework I propose is both broader and more limited (Kester, 2013). It is broader in the sense that it is applicable to all forms of art, not only that art created with a dialogical engagement in mind, but our focus here is also limited insofar as the dialogical production of art will not be considered. Furthermore, it is posited here that dialogical engagement with art is not dependent on a pre-existing shared discursive matrix, but that it is possible for a poetics to emerge in the process of art participation (Kester, 2004).

[9] Grounded in the aesthetic thought of Ernst Cassirer and Susanne Langer, Anne Pollok (2016) also develops an intersubjective aesthetic that emphasizes the experience of art as a dynamic between two polls. Where Pollok and the present model diverge relates not only to the concept of art as language-game but also to the polls themselves. While it is agreed that the art participant forms one poll, this present model understands the second poll to be comprised of the artist by way of the work of art, while Pollok discounts the artist and emphasizes the work itself (Pollok, 2016).

[10] In this consideration, we will be limited to healing from trauma, specifically within a trauma-inducing environment. While the concluding chapters will consider broader application, this more limited scope will be the exclusive focus here. Thus, "therapeutic" is shorthand for "the practice that aims at achieving healing from trauma itself or insight that may encourage that healing."

in a later chapter, is of living a resurrected life, peacefully connected with others and with a sense of the Holy. Any goal which might help to move an individual towards that end may be properly understood as therapeutic, for the sake of defining the practice. Following chapters will consider the therapeutic practice of art in action, evaluating the efficacy of the practice and analyzing ways to employ fruitfully the practice.

Art is not the exclusive source of aesthetic delight. One can enjoy the beauty of a sunset, the scent of a freshly baked pie, or the remarkable athleticism of a soccer player. More analogically, one can delight in the "beauty" of a moment, be it romantic engagement, victory in competition, or the answer to a long-considered puzzle. What, then, separates art from these things? One possible answer is to posit an artist: a person who, intentionally or unintentionally, has a created a *thing*, be it something engaged visually, aurally, tactilely, or by means of some other sense or combination of senses.[11] The artist, one may infer in most cases, brought into being a product with, again in *most* cases, a purpose, though the list of those possible purposes is as extensive as the list of social practices and may be unknown to the artist at the time of making the particular piece of art.[12]

It may be plausibly claimed that at least a subset of "art" consists of works or pieces of art that were intentionally brought into existence by a person who had some purpose or intention when doing so. When considering and analyzing the therapeutic practice of art, it will be with that subset in view.[13] I will argue that, when considering that subset of art, the artist is engaging in an act of communication. One should not, however, assume that art as a means of

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[11] One should not consider this *thing* brought forth by an artist in purely tangible, substantive terms. The term is not meant to necessarily imply enduring ontological status.

[12] Furthermore, it should be argued that the ability of the art-participant to parse out that meaning or intent is exceedingly limited, and a best-case scenario would result in a belief with a low amount of justification or warrant (Barthes, 1977).

[13] This is not to argue that other works of art cannot be therapeutically engaged, but the present study will abide by this limitation.

communication, then, could be reduced to some noetic message. Communication is far broader than simply the vehicle of conveying information; one can communicate with the intent of eliciting emotion or action in another, without the transmission of information or noetic content.[14] One helpful way of conceptualizing this process is presented by Garry L. Hagberg (1994), envisioning art as language and employing the structure of Ludwig Wittgenstein's language-games. Artistic forms are analogous to Wittgensteinian language-games, Hagberg argues, and the artist, in bringing forth works of art, speaks that unique language.

This, then, forms the core conceptual framework for art engagement. The participant is engaged in a social practice of participation while the artist is playing a language-game.[15] These dual actions come together in an experiential, dialogical moment, centered on the work of art itself, and surfacing an Other and another language. After examining this construal more closely, the balance of the chapter will consider outside factors and forces that powerfully influence the production and experience of art. While certain forces, such as the economic influence of late-stage capitalism, undoubtedly wield significant influence, the factors considered here are of a particular importance for incarcerated persons: the dynamics of race, power, politics, and fear. These particular factors are selected because of their overt presence in the incarcerated environment. Fear is, at least at times, almost palpable and always close to the surface. This often draws incarcerated persons together along racial lines for the sake of mutual protection, a political dynamic in which power is exercised and upon which power is exerted.

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[14] A lengthy analysis of communication is beyond the purview of the present text. Broad claims will be made, as they relate to the thesis, but an extensive evaluation of communication of theory is not presented.
[15] It is this focus on art as language-game that distinguishes this model from the relational aesthetic of Nicholas Bourriaud (1998).

Social Practices of Art

Nicholas Wolterstorff identifies three interlocking categories of practices related to art: "practices of composition, practices of performance and display, and practices of public engagement" (Wolterstorff, 2015, p. 132). The third of these practices will be considered presently, under the rubric of art-participation, followed by a consideration of the first. The second practice, that of performance and display, will only find reference in passing and within the particular context of a specific work of art. In employing the plural, practices, Wolterstorff reinforces his opposition to what he terms the "Grand Narrative," a way of thinking about art that has come to prominence since the Eighteenth Century (Wolterstorff, 2008). According to this approach, art is to be considered objectively, disinterestedly, and primarily, if not exclusively, as a work of art. As such, particular works are pulled from their context and their intended *use*, considering them simply as objects of reflection and appreciation and limiting their *function*. Such a point of view fails to appreciate or apply that many works of art were, and are, created with an intention other than aesthetic examination and appreciation.[16] Songs, for example, are composed for a host of reasons: to entertain, to teach, to encourage, to guide, to correct, to inspire, and to worship simply to name a few. Furthermore, to claim that disinterested aesthetic contemplation excludes or invalidates other social practices of engagement seems both prima facie false and morally questionable.

This point of view assumes that art is more than simply a passive *thing*, but can be instrumental or functional, and, in an analogical sense, can have agency. Stated otherwise, a work of art can have a meaning that is beyond a mere statement of its existence and its positive qualities. Wolterstorff delineates three primary meanings. The first of these is maker-meaning,

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[16] This is not to say that some art is in fact created purely for aesthetic enjoyment. Certainly, a great deal of art is produced simply to be observed and enjoyed.

what it is that the artist herself intends to convey, project, or demonstrate with her art. This meaning may be capturable in words or it may not, as in the case of art that speaks to a feeling or experience that transcends language. Maker-meaning assumes a mind on the part of the artist, and intention; art is not a random collection of visual or aural stimuli, but rather is a vehicle or means of communication.[17] That meaning may be communicated more or less effectively, influenced by an inexhaustible list of factors, and is likely never to be perfectly or fully known.[18] What is accessible, however, is the meaning of a particular work of art for a particular individual at a particular time and engaged in a particular way. This Wolterstorff terms social-practice meaning.

In the simplest of terms, social-practice meaning is the meaning a work of art has for the art-participant. This meaning may or may not be closely aligned with the maker-meaning of a work, and at any rate the degree of such congruence would be impossible to determine. What can be known is what a particular painting, song, or dance means for an individual at their moment of experience and upon later reflection. By locating the meaning temporally, space is held that a particular work of art can have different meanings at different times. A song of love and loss, which itself remains the same, surely resonates differently for a teenage boy and an elderly woman who recently lost her life-long partner. In Wolterstorffian terms, the maker-meaning has remained the same, but the social-practice meaning has changed. The context of participation can greatly shape the meaning of a piece of art. Perhaps more especially with abstract visual art or

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[17] Certain forms or modes of art creation, aleatoric music for example, may fall outside this categorization.
[18] Not only is the efficacy of communication or meaning-transmission of potentially unequal quality, but the capacity for verification may be limited or impossible. The artist herself may not recall her maker-meaning, and the ability to enter the mind of an artist long-dead is clearly impossible. Even were an artist to record their intended meaning, those words would be subject to manifold interpretation or misinterpretation. As such, it may be stated that objective assurance, or justified knowledge, of maker-meaning is unattainable.

instrumental music, the physical, social, psychological, and even spiritual location of an individual can powerfully shape a work's social-practice meaning.[19]

Wolterstorff's focus, however, is not on how the totality of the participant's environment, experience, and psychological and physical state shape the social-practice meaning of art, but rather on how the manner of engagement itself shapes the work's meaning. This gets to the heart of the concept of social practices: individuals can engage or participate in a work of art in many different ways. Take, for example, the Kyrie from Bach's Mass in B Minor. Given contemporary technology, it is possible to listen to this masterpiece in a nearly unlimited number of contexts, using a variety of modes. Some privileged individuals may hear it live in a concert hall, while others may hear it through air pods from a smartphone. While those contexts are vastly different, the *manner* in which the piece is experienced is essentially the same: Bach's composition is heard as an artistic, classical piece of music. For some of Bach's contemporaries, however, his music was not an objective piece of art, but rather an integral liturgical element. Those who gathered for worship in Leipzig sang the Kyrie as an expression of their faith, recognizing it as an important part of their liturgy. While they may have appreciated the aesthetic qualities of the work, they participated in the music in a fundamentally different way, producing a substantially different social-practice meaning.

There is a third meaning, which will find significant importance in the context of a later consideration: projected-world meaning. Perhaps most easily grasped when considering fiction, though visual arts are also effective in this regard, projected-world meaning assumes that a work of art creates a noetic space, a world, that can be "inhabited" by the reader or participant. When reading *At the Mountains of Madness*, one feels transported by Lovecraft to an imagined city and

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[19] Later in this chapter, we will consider how the incarcerated environment shapes the therapeutic social practice of art-engagement.

caverns deep within Antarctic ice. The reader may feel that they are living in that same space, experiencing the emotive force of a world that does not physically exist. The experience of the artist's projected world can shape and even define additional meanings, meanings that may or may not result in beliefs about the actual world, which has obtained.[20] This projected-world meaning assumes an active participation on the part of the reader, one who is doing more than examining the text for its aesthetic value.

These differing modes of participation, social practices, come in a variety of different sorts, and can be categorized in a variety of ways. One way of delineating social practices is by categorizing them either as deontological or teleological. Deontological social practice would be comprised of those social practices defined, one could say, *a priori*, while teleological social practices are more *a posteriori* in nature, focusing on the ends achieved. For deontological social practices, the final result of the social practice is less significant than the rules that govern and shape the practice itself. The social practice of art as defined by the Grand Narrative, for example, stands as a deontological engagement. The professional art critique is equipped with rules, supplied with information, and disinterestedly engages the work. The individual specifically works to remain unmoved and disinterested, unconcerned with a process or change that might come about within themselves or society, and steadfastly focused on applying the perceived rules of art interpretation. Social justice art, however, stands in significant contrast. Art produced with the intent that it be engaged using the practice of social justice, is made *for the purpose of* achieving a more just society. The method of achieving that end may differ, it may serve to highlight the need for change or seek to mobilize individuals to take action, but the

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[20] It will be argued later, paralleling Wolterstorff, that such meanings can and do produce accurate or true beliefs about the "real world."

overarching goal remains the same. As such, teleological social practices of art are future-oriented and dedicated to a produced change within a subject or subjects.

A second categorization of social practices divides them between social and corporate engagement of art. While a permeable distinction, individual practices of art-engagement are those engaged primarily by an individual person. While it should be observed that such a practice is certainly mediated by other people, factors, and forces, the participant may not be cognizant of such factors in the moment of participation. They see themselves as alone in their appreciation of the work. While it is certainly possible for *Ulysses* to be read aloud for a group of listeners, it is likely that James Joyce envisioned individual readers, and a majority of those who experience that novel do so when reading silently to themselves. Other art seems clearly to be created for corporate enjoyment. Bach, one may assume, when composing his masses and liturgical elements, had in mind the congregation that would gather to hear his soaring themes. Furthermore, the act of hearing such performances as part of a community fundamentally alters the meaning of the composition. This is not to say that the exclusive manner of engaging Bach's sacred music is when gathered for corporate Christian worship, but the social practice for which the work was originally composed, and through which it was to be understood by the composer, involved a community of participants.

A final means of categorizing social practices of art is to identify those practices that are primary assisted and those that are generally unassisted. Assisted social practices may be considered a subset of corporate practices, differentiated from others because, in these practices, another aids the participant. In a sense, all orchestral music falls into this category, as it requires a variety of artists working in conjunction to produce the overall effect intended by the composer. Other examples would include those practices that necessarily require translation or

explanation or cannot be fully experienced by an individual in isolation, Handel's *Rinaldo* for example. It may be possible to engage such works of art as an individual, but that individual will be left bereft. Unassisted practices of art-engagement are the far more common and intuitive. These practices can be undertaken by individuals without the help of another. The enjoyment produced by such practices may be multiplied by corporate engagement, but nothing fundamental to the social-practice meaning of the work is lost or altered by solipsistic participation.[21]

The Therapeutic Practice of Art

The fundamental thesis of this work is that there is a therapeutic social practice of art or, more precisely, a bundle of related social practices of art that are categorized by their shared purpose, namely healing from trauma. Using the categories presented above can help to clarify exactly what is meant by the therapeutic practice. The therapeutic social practice of art-engagement is fundamentally teleological, individual, and assisted. The practice is, first and foremost, teleological. The purpose of engaging in the therapeutic practice is to find healing or to work towards healing from trauma. The focus is on the product or the result of the art-participation, and while certain rules or suggestions may be offered that could aid in effective employment of the practice, those should be understood as pliable guidelines rather than hard and fast rules. What is determinative is the *telos*.

Some, such as de Botton and Armstrong (2013), argue that therapeutic participation in art should be considered normative. While much of their thesis resonates with the current proposal, I suggest, along with Wolterstorff, that therapeutic benefit is primarily derived when art is

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[21] It should be noted that one invalid way of dividing social practices would be to separate mediated practices from unmediated ones. Wolterstorff uses the term "social practices" specifically, recognizing that they are the product of social groups, shaped by the social environment, and employees within a context. As such, all social practices of art are mediated. The relevant question becomes one of awareness and appreciation of that mediation.

engaged with the intent of achieving or finding that benefit, and that a plethora of other practices

of engagement exist that may yield positive and life-affirming results, which are not directly

associated with healing from trauma. What is, perhaps, of greatest benefit in considering de

Botton and Armstrong is their delineation of seven particular ways in which participating in a

work of art is therapeutically beneficial.[22] Art is able to expand one's capacity to experience both

hope and sorrow as it reminds the participant of beauty in the world and invites them to

experience it while also providing a space for private suffering. Art can contribute to self-

understanding and growth, aiding participants to see themselves and others in a new way. Art

helps people to appreciate the beauty in their life and provides space for emotional experiences

that can help to meet largely unmet needs in a process the authors term rebalancing (de Botton &

Armstrong, 2013). While all of these benefits are helpful in trauma recovery the benefit that

holds the most power for healing from trauma, while also the riskiest, is the power of art to

evoke memories, not only of facts but more primarily of the essence of events. All of these

benefits, along with a host of others, help to define the *telos* of the therapeutic social practice.

The practice is also individual. While it is certainly possible to conceive of groups

engaging therapeutically and finding healing for the group and individual members, the practice

should be fundamentally understood as the work of a person. The reality confronting caregivers

for trauma survivors is that trauma healing is fundamentally the work of the survivor. The

chaplain, pastor, or therapist cannot heal the survivor; they must do their work. That work,

however, need not be accomplished in isolation. Trauma survivors, especially, may resist the

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[22] A lengthy conversation could be had around their suggestion that art highlights what is appealing, though oft ignored, and provides a vision that individuals can strive towards, demonstrating how to love well, for example, or what a culture might look like after deconstructing its late-model capitalist system. While such a claim cannot be legitimately denied, the present model emphasizes a dialogue between artist and participant, leading to a more egalitarian power dynamic than the system presented by de Botton and Armstrong, which could easily fall prey to paternalistic power structures.

type of authentic, dialogical connection needed. They may be neurobiologically impeded from doing so, but constructive work over time can help to establish the relational space necessary to engage in the practice (Dana, 2018).

While attempts to engage therapeutically with art while alone may yield positive results, such actions should not be considered normative. Therapeutic engagement with art ought to take place within a safe space, an environment specifically shaped for the purpose.[23] Having entered into the world of the artist's creating, a world in which the artist speaks through the language-game of her art, the participants is well-positioned to learn and grow. The artist, through their communication, aids in the expansion of the participant's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Their potential for development and growth becomes greater, and thus the need for scaffolding as well. Without privileging the caregiver's status, it is possible for her to support and undergird the survivor's growth and learning, a practice that not only ensures the practice's therapeutic value but also assures a continually reinvigorated experience. This will be explored in greater detail later. At the outset, it is sufficient to note that the practice is fundamentally an assisted one: the caregiver's role and person is essential.

The term "dialogue" will be used throughout this work to describe what happens in the midst of a therapeutic engagement with art. Linguistically, that term may be deceiving, both because it seems to imply two actors or two clusters of actors.[24] This fails to appreciate the assisted nature of therapeutic engagement. Who, in that instance, are the dialogue partners? One possible suggestion is that the caregiver and the survivor are the two partners in dialogue, and that the art is the means of dialogue, the mediating structure of their discourse. Another possible

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[23] The nature of this environment will be explored in detail in later chapters.
[24] Additionally, the use of the term "dialogue" in this text is meant to connote something broader than mere linguistic exchange. Dialogue, in this sense, speaks to an authentic meeting or *being with* the dialogue partner(s).

answer is that the survivor is in dialogue with the art, and the caregiver serves as the mediator / translator or means of communication and engagement. Both of these answers have quite a bit to commend them. On one hand, the former posits that the only dialogue partners are human persons who are clearly capable of communicating and responding, in short to dialogue. The latter posits the art as a conversation partner, though it might be more proper to speak of the artist as a mediated conversation partner, speaking the language of their art. Such a move makes the practice conceptually more intuitive, and opens the possibility for a greater richness in conversation, but is not a necessary component of the practice.

Perhaps a better construal would introduce the term trialogue rather than dialogue. The conversation partners in the therapeutic practice include the survivor, the caregiver, and the art itself. The image of a triangle has elements that are both helpful and potentially misleading. As argued above, the therapeutic practice is fundamentally assisted; the caregiver plays a vital role in facilitating and strengthening the dialogue between the art / artist and the survivor. If visualized as a triangle, this aspect may be lessened or missed altogether. However, this shape does surface an important element for the caregiver's consideration; one cannot assist a survivor to engage therapeutically with a work of art without also engaging that art. The caregiver is not a divorced, disinterested, or purely objective participant; they are deeply enmeshed in the practice and themselves engage with the art. Their engagement is fundamentally different from the survivors, but a caregiver who refuses to engage the art, especially in the moment of the practice, will inevitably fail to fully facilitate and bring to realization the power of the practice.[25]

One final, and immensely significant, element should be added to the triangular image. While survivor, caregiver, and art / artist are all dialogue partners, the engagement does not take

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[25] There are many reasons for this, which will be discussed at a later point.

place in a theological vacuum.[26] In order to work well, the therapeutic practice requires authentic presence. Survivor and caregiver must inhabit their authentic Selves and present themselves as such. One of the gifts of art is that it is always an authentic conversation partner. A painting is a painting and, once produced, remains.[27] As such, the trialogue of therapeutic engagement, ideally at least, constitutes an extraordinary example of the type of human connection that surfaces the presence of the Holy (Buber, 1988). When the practice is employed well, a Fourth, one who is always already present, emerges. It is not that the Divine comes into existence as a result of authentic presence; rather such engagement reveals what is already a reality and positions the participants to more readily imbibe and experience the Holy. Their spiritual sensitivity heightened and the ontological reality clarified, survivors in such a position are well-suited for therapeutic movement.[28]

Social practices are, by definition, difficult to describe in the abstract. At this point, it might be difficult to put into words or place one's finger on what exactly a social practice is; it is far easier to define them by extension. In the following chapters, a number of individuals, and one group, will be considered. Each, in their own way, is engaged in a therapeutic social practice. The individuals, and the art they engage with, are unique and diverse. Most, or perhaps all, engage with art that was not brought forth with the therapeutic practice in mind. In fact, the participant of one work believed that the maker-meaning of the work they participated with was counter to therapeutic goals. Art need not be made for a therapeutic purpose in order to be

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[26] While the following will present a specifically Christian theology of the therapeutic social practice of art, analogues can certainly be developed that embrace differing theological traditions. An atheistic conception, likewise, can be coherently developed.

[27] Art that is intentionally deceptive certainly exists, particularly in literature, but represents a small percentage of all art. A painting will fade or might be altered. The context of engagement will change the art's appearance. Every live performance of music, likewise, involves subtle differences; with a nod to Heraclitus, one never steps into the same concert hall twice, but by and large art can only be what it is. The importance of proper artistic selection will be considered in the conclusion.

[28] The work of the Holy in this space is a topic that will be explored in greater detail later.

engaged therapeutically. Such a thought on the part of the artist may make it more effective, and art that is itself created as a therapeutic outlet for the artist might likewise prove a fruitful conversation partner, but neither are a requirement for the practice. As presented above, the same work of art can be practiced in many different ways, producing different social-practice meaning, but not delegitimizing the practices themselves. A more careful consideration of the act of the art production is now in order, a consideration that will clarify the possibility of art as conversation partner and shed greater light on how best to therapeutically engage works of art.

Art as Language Game

The experience of art frequently, though not exclusively, includes a feeling on the part of the participant of *being addressed*. In some instances, such as when hearing poetry or reading literature, that feeling can be explained in a rather straightforward way. The author or poet has a voice, and the reader is addressed by that voice. Likewise, in drama, narrators, choruses, and even characters themselves occasionally address the audience directly.[29] What, though, of other art forms? Does a painter have a "voice"? Is one addressed when they take in a painting, a dance, or a concerto? Art, by its nature, is a thing observed, but is that observation a form of communication?[30] Cast in other terms: when one participates with a work of art, is their interaction primarily an interaction with an object, a *thing*, or with the person or persons who stand behind the thing, having brought it into being? If it is the latter, how should one conceive of that communication?

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[29] This act, occasionally labeled "breaking the fourth wall," is a convention with a long history and increasing popularity. The values of authentic presence and dialogue seem to be of increasing import in contemporary American society, and the breaking of the fourth wall may well reflect that. Inviting audiences to be participants, and even characters in a drama, is not only an entertaining convention but a way of recognizing and respecting the humanity of the audience.

[30] This is not to say that art becomes art when it is observed. A poem, unread, remains art, just a tune one hummed individually remains music.

In his text, *Meaning & Interpretation*, G.L. Hagberg presents an understanding of art grounded in an analogical application of Wittgenstein's language games. For Hagberg, art is a form of communication, a family of language games. To understand what Hagberg is arguing, one must first grasp what it was the Wittgenstein was arguing: namely that language is radically contextual. To ask what a term or a sentence means in some objective sense, absent any and all context, is to ask an empty question, for even the question loses meaning when lifted from the context in which it is asked. Likewise, to assume that all words refer inherently to some objective thing outside of language, or a particular language game, is to fail to take into account just how culturally bound language necessarily is, and just how counterintuitive and mist-enshrouded linguistic realism can be.[31] Meaning is not to be found outside of the words, but is demonstrated in its use; words and sentences are comprehensible only as they are read within the boundaries and according to the rules of a particular language game (Hagberg, 1994). Furthermore, meaning is more of a functional rather than a propositional concept. Language functions: it informs, it queries, it commands, it entertains, it brings about an action in response to itself. To use the terminology of speech act theory, the communicator performs an action, a locution – utters a sound, writes a sentence, or paints a picture – with illocutionary force – to command, promise, or warn, for example. This single speech-act may bring about a response in another, a perlocutionary act (Austin, 1962). The meaning of the locutionary act is not some objective, inherent set of concepts, but is intrinsically tied to the illocutionary purpose of the locution and the perlocutionary response that the communicator hopes to achieve.

With a nod to Wittgenstein's famed example of stonemasons, one can imagine a scenario that may prove illuminating. Suppose one were to observe a very primitive language, as

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[31] A full consideration and critique of Wittgenstien's philosophy of language is far outside the scope of this present work. Only in its relevance for Hagberg's work will it be considered.

employed by a pair of bakers, preparing pies. One baker is busy preparing delicious pumpkin pie-filling, while the other focuses on the crust. Each works in silence until the latter, in a burst of verbosity, utters "filling." Upon hearing the word, the former pours an appropriate amount of the pie filling into the crust. The utterance of the latter baker, in stating "filling," is the locutionary act. The request, or perhaps command as the baker power structure is not readily apparent in this example, to pour filling into the crust is the illocutionary element or act performed by means of the utterance of "filling." The baker pouring filling into the crust constitutes the perlocutionary act, intended by the illocutionary act and accomplished by the locutionary act. Language, then, is primarily a matter of function, and function defined by the context, self-sufficient and yet capable of expanding.[32]

While Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy, and the literature it called forth, is of immense depth and includes a significant number of elements, these basic concepts suffice for the purposes of considering art as a means of communication. Each style of art represents a broad family of language games, with each particular artist speaking a "dialect." Like any language, it undergoes change; responding to shifts in the artist and the cultural environment the language grows and develops organically. However, the fundamental structure remains the same. Once one learns the artistic equivalent of the grammatical structure and rules along with the rudimentary vocabulary employed, works of art begin to open. What might have originally stood as a confusing amalgam of shapes and colors suddenly becomes a powerful message or reflection of the artist's truth.

Extending the analogy, one can be described as growing in fluency; with growing experience and familiarity, an art participant can more readily understand what the artist sought

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[32] These latter claims, namely that language games are self-sufficient and capable of growth, should not be accepted without argument. In his text, G.L. Hagberg provides a persuasive case (Hagberg, 1994).

to communicate through her work (Wolterstorff, 2015). This, however, should be placed within the context of the set of meanings put forth by Wolterstorff. The concept of language games does not confine art to a singular meaning. Stated in a different way, the fact that an artist employs their art as a language game does not necessitate the belief that the art can only mean what Wolterstorff labels maker-meaning. It does elucidate how one may gain clarity on that maker-meaning, and it certainly shapes how the participant employs the social practice of engaging that art, but it does not restrict the meaning to the purely historical.

A further observation may be made regarding fluency. Fluency is encouraged through engagement in the language game itself, for to step out of the specific language game renders the words themselves unintelligible. They are native residents of the language and any attempt to gain clarity by way of disconnection or distancing invites further mist to cloud the meaning (Wittgenstein, 1953). The analogy to art surfaces an important point. To learn the language of an artist and gain fluency in their language game, one must enter into that world, that "form of life," and participate in it, according to the organically-formed and governing rules (Hagberg, 1994). As mentioned above, the triaglogue of therapeutic engagement requires the participation of the caregiver. She must be present not only to the survivor, but also to the art; she must participate in the art, engaging it authentically, as the practice requires. Facilitating communication, or assisting in the therapeutic social practice, demands a caregiver who enters into the language game of the art, and speaks that language in dialogue with art / artist and the survivor. Only then can a language for therapeutic action be found.

The language of the therapeutic social practice of art is determined by the language game of the artist.[33] The art itself demonstrates the language and provides the linguistic blocks for

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[33] An interesting aside is to question whether different styles of art, within a broader medium, should be understood as dialects of a particular language or discrete languages in and of themselves. Were Monet and Picasso speaking

conversation. As Hagberg argues, the language can be expanded beyond the art, but only in a way that is organically connected to what is said, in accordance with the rules of the game, and does not do violence either to the artist or the art itself. Pervading, saturating, and undergirding the art and the language game of the artist is the presence of the Holy. As such, one can speak of the language game of the artist, employed within the therapeutic social practice, as a theopoetics (Caputo, 2006). This theopoetics is language, in some sense new but also in a profound sense well-known, that provides the grammar necessary for speaking new realities, even healing, into existence. Language of hope and healing can be formed from the theopoetic, artistic, and linguistic substrate. The theopoetics that surfaces from the therapeutic engagement is a language of something new. While there may be found a relationship with past languages, akin to the relationship between Koine and Attic Greek, this new language, grounded in the new experience of the art and the always-new language of the Holy, opens up the possibility to speak of renewed living and understanding (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Art, when considered from the point of view of the observer-participant, is the subject-object of social practices. Within the therapeutic social practice, it is seen as a participant in a trialogue between trauma survivor, caregiver, and art / artist. When considered from the point of view of the artist bringing forth her work, it is a language-game, a form of communication with the power not only to speak but also to respond when engaged in different ways and at different times. Considered together, the reality of a theopoetics comes to the surface, a language that opens the survivor to a new way of thinking and speaking, a fertile soil for life and flourishing.

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dialects of 'painting,' impressionist and cubist dialects respectively, or are impressionism and cubism different languages altogether? I feel it is more accurate to claim that they are particular languages, which bear a family resemblance, akin to the relationship between Romance languages for example, rather than merely dialects.

Four significant propositions can be validly inferred from the simple proposition that art is communication, each of which is relevant for healing from trauma. The first of these propositions is that if art is communication, then art can be a place of meeting. Communication is not a requirement or necessary condition for authentic presence and authentic presence does not necessarily imply communication, but communication very often allows for and enhances the sense of connection between individuals. Secondly, if art is communication, then art can be a means of conversation. This communication is not static; its dynamism is grounded in the ever-flexible nature of the therapeutic practice of art engagement. The list of factors that can influence social-practice meaning is lengthy, including the participant's well-being, state of mind, and environment as well as the questions posed of the art and knowledge of the work and the artist. As such, true conversation can take place, both in the sense that art is the means of communication with the artist and is the partner itself. This is the third implied proposition: art can be a legitimate and real conversation partner for those who engage it as a language game.

The final, and most relevant, proposition for the present project is the implied truth that art, if it is communication, can be an aid in healing. Healing from trauma occurs in a social environment, formed through communication (van der Kolk, 2014). Authentic presence and true witnessing to the trauma and to the survivor is another vital condition for healing (Herman, 2015). While the primary access of that connection will be between survivor and caregiver, the dialogical connection between survivor and art / artist can also serve a healing role. This experience will be demonstrated in the following case studies, but before those case studies can be fully appreciated, a further reflection on the incarcerated environment and the influence of

that environment on those engaging in the therapeutic social practice of art is warranted.[34] Prior to that consideration, however, two related questions ought to be asked and answered.

Awareness

The overarching dialogical aesthetic presented here consists of three elements: two poles and the dialogical connection. The first pole, that of the participant, centers on social practices of art engagement, specifically the therapeutic social practice of art. The second pole, that of the artist, centers on art as a language game, a form of communication between the artist and the participant(s). The dialogical connection between these poles includes the surfacing of a theopoetics, a language infused by the Holy, but shaped by the art, in which the participant, the assisting caregiver, and that art / artist are able to dialogue. All of this may sound well and good, but as an overarching theory, one may well question whether those who engage with art therapeutically and those who bring forth art do so with a conscious awareness of what they are doing. Even granting that the theory presented is only applicable in a limited number of cases, do those who meet the criteria do so consciously? Is it possible to engage with art therapeutically but be unaware of doing so? Is it possible that artists are speaking a language game, a language that is in a sense of their own construction without knowing that they are doing so? Can a theopoetics surface in the therapeutic space without caregiver or survivor consciously translating their thoughts into that language?

The first question to be answered is posed with respect to the artist, the individual who, in the language of the proposed theory, is speaking a language game through her work of art. Is it

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[34] In trauma, the ordinary process of memory storage and retrieval is disrupted. Instead of being stored in narrative form, trauma memory is instead fragmented into images and bodily sensations, resisting full descriptive identity. (Guina, Nahhas, Sutton, & Farnsworth, 2018). Therefore, the stories told here are told to the best of the storyteller's memory and to the degree the teller trusts the listener. Whether the events shared are factually true is less important than acknowledging the impact they had, and continue to have, on the teller.

possible that an artist is speaking a language game, even a language game particular to them and bounded by their work, without realizing that such an event is taking place? The answer to this question is an unequivocal yes. People communicate without consciously realizing it on a regular basis. In fact, it may be persuasively argued that people are in a constant state of communication, through their body language, affect, clothing choices, and manifold other ways. One may say, though, that such unconscious communication is the product of unconscious activities on the part of the communicator. While it may be agreed that in a vast majority of instances artists are aware of the fact that they are producing art, their awareness of that process may be limited. They may be unreflective or think in different terms or categories. Such an individual may still be validly speaking a language game without using that terminology. Those forms of art less intuitively connected to the written or spoken word, may be produced by those who envision their work in visual or aural terms, but such works still convey meaning, and the means of that conveyance fit comfortably within the categories of a language-game.

It is exceedingly likely that most artists are not thinking within the categories of language games when they form their works of art. If one were to limit the selection of art for therapeutic engagement to those created by individuals or communities thinking in that manner, the list of available works would be brief indeed! Communication can happen, even from someone who is unaware of their communicating or the manner of that communication. However, is the same true for those on the other pole, those who are participating in art? The answer to this question has direct bearing on the question of the social practice itself.

On one hand, the answer to the question of whether one can therapeutically engage with art without knowing it is straightforward and simple. Yes, one can engage with art in such a manner that results in positive growth, insight, or healing without consciously engaging the art

for that purpose. As I did when participating with Linnell's *The Eve of the Deluge*, I positively experienced art, with resultant personal growth, without intentionality. A first response to this observation, however, is to note that the therapeutic social practice of art is not the only social practice that produces positive outcomes. One may engage in the social protest practice of art and experience growth and healing as a result. The primary aim, or *telos*, of the practice may not be personal improvement, but as a secondary or tertiary result, that can and certainly does take place. What differentiates the therapeutic social practice from other good-producing practices is the intentionality; the therapeutic practice's primary goal is healing.

That is not the only means of differentiation, but it is the most relevant. If one of the primary ways of delineating the therapeutic practice of art is the intent, then it stands to reason that the practice cannot be engaged unintentionally. Furthermore, as the therapeutic practice is primarily an assisted practice, it is not engaged in isolation. The trialogic structure of survivor, caregiver, and art / artist must be in place, and such an arrangement does not come about without conscious effort. That said, it is certainly possible that a caregiver can introduce a work of art into the therapeutic situation without explaining that they are about to engage with the art therapeutically. While the survivor should reasonably assume that the caregiver is introducing the art for a constructive purpose, it is not therapeutically necessary for the caregiver to lay her card on the table, but rather to allow the power of the practice to speak for itself.

The third question of awareness relates to the surfaced theopoetics of the therapeutic practice. Is it possible for the caregiver or for the survivor to speak using this new theopoetics without realizing that they are doing so? The answer to this question can be considered from both points of view. From the perspective of the caregiver, it is possible for them to speak using the surfaced theopoetics, but may not be therapeutically advisable. For the survivor, however,

speaking the surfaced theopoetic language may come so naturally that they do not recognize that a shift in language has taken place. They may indeed be so immersed in the work of art, that their language is naturally shifted. At that point, it becomes a matter of therapeutic judgement on the part of the caregiver to determine if observing such a shift is beneficial in the moment.

It is worth mentioning, however, that a fundamental shift does in fact take place within the language itself when it moves from a perceived and experienced language of meanings circumscribed by the experience of the artwork to an expressed language used for the purpose of communication. In this context, Lev Vygotsky's concepts of public, private, and silent inner speech become helpful in elucidation (Vygotsky, 1962). The language of the art, though prompted by an external stimulus, is primarily a matter of private language, internally experienced by the participants, and readily beneficial for human development. Once spoken, however, it becomes communication-focused and external. This shift requires coding, or translation, on the part of the speaker and can involve a learning curve as newly formed concepts seek accurate external expression. This is a space in which the caregiver, through encouragement and support, can help call forth the emergent theopoetics into expressibility.

Suppose, however, that the survivor does grow in her awareness that she is speaking a different language of sorts. They notice that when they deeply participate in art that their way of thinking and speaking shifts into a more life-focused, hopeful dialect. Must the survivor recognize that what they are speaking is a *theo*poetics? Must they label the experience, or frame it, in theological terms? It would be a tenuous argument indeed to limit the Holy's capacity to heal or to speak to those cases where it is recognized as such. The work of the Divine often goes unnoticed or unrecognized. Recognizing this also broadens the applicability of the theory to

those caregivers and survivors who do not feel comfortable thinking, speaking, or acting in theological terms. The therapeutic practice of art need not be a religious or even theistic practice.

Incarcerated Influences on the Therapeutic Practice of Art

Social practices of art are, above all, a human activity, engaged by persons in particular contexts and subject to the influences of the environment. Likewise, one's experience and psychological health can dramatically shape the experience of art and the resultant social-practice meaning. This is dramatically on display within the incarcerated environment. In another chapter we will consider the impact of the incarcerated environment on incarcerated persons, but here our focus will be on how that environment influences the experience of art, specifically by means of therapeutic engagement.

Fear

Figure 2

Untitled Painting of a Farmer and His Dog in the Meolwyn Mountains of Snowdonia

Note: Adapted from Williams, K. (1970). *Untitled painting of a farmer and his dog in the Moelwyn Mountains of Snowdonia.* [Oil on canvas]. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, UK. In pictures: National Library of Wales landscapes exhibition (October 19, 2013). Retrieved from: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-mid-wales-24385027.

Jimmy had been down for just over a decade, and had recently experienced a series of losses. He initially met with me in order to process his grief around the loss of his father, and we had met bi-weekly for several months following. Once, during casual conversation, Jimmy mentioned how much he appreciated landscape paintings, observing that the view from the prison could be beautiful during the spring, summer, and, especially, autumn. We discussed the valley in which we were located, and eventually the conversation turned to Jimmy's recollection of a childhood trip to the United Kingdom. His memory of the vivid landscape and rolling hills remained strong even until that day. The following session, I displayed on my computer for

Jimmy a series of landscape paintings of the United Kingdom, including the untitled painting by

Sir Kyffin Williams above (see Figure 2). Jimmy's response was surprising.

"That's a pretty messed up picture there, Chap," Jimmy began (JG, personal

communication, June 15, 2018). When I asked why, Jimmy went on to share his experience of

the painting. For him, the seemingly male figure was in great danger. The dark colors and

shadowy edges created for Jimmy a sense of uncertainty, while he interpreted the dog's

positioning as aggressive. In Jimmy's mind, the dog was barking at an unseen danger, hidden

behind the outcropping of rocks to the bottom right of the painting. He additionally noted that the

male figure seemed unsteady, perhaps ready to fall, and on the edge of cliff. "Something bad is

about to happen here, Chap," Jimmy said, demonstrating through his affect and body language

that he was experiencing acute anxiety at the thought (JG, personal communication, June 15,

2018).

Jimmy's perhaps surprising response to the painting demonstrates two significant factors

that shape how incarcerated people often experience art. The first is the lingering impact of

trauma, either traumas experienced prior to or during incarceration or the trauma of incarceration

itself. Buckley, Blanchard, and Neill (2000), among other researchers, demonstrate an

information bias within those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Even among

trauma survivors without the diagnosis of PTSD, a bias exists towards neutral stimuli,

interpreting such stimuli as threatening, with a concurrent neurobiological response. Likewise,

those with PTSD demonstrate an increased sensitivity to potentially traumatizing information

and imagery (Weber, 2008). Given this reality and the nearly universal prevalence of trauma

survivors within the incarcerated context, the fact that Jimmy responded to the work of art as he

did should come as no surprise. Images that had appeared to me as neutral at worst triggered within him a mild trauma response.

Incarcerated persons exist in a nearly-constant state of emotional arousal; their limbic system is on full alert. Legitimate threats can seemingly appear at a moment's notice, leaving the already predisposed amygdala highly reactive (Dannlowski et al, 2012).[35] Furthermore, the regular occurrence of events that stimulate the fight, flight, or freeze response leaves incarcerated persons frequently either "coming down" or "amping up" (Brunetti et al, 2017). Regardless of where they find themselves on the polyvagal ladder or in what stage of acute stress response they exist, fear is a reality for incarcerated persons (Dana, 2018).

It should perhaps go without saying that prison is a frightening place, a reality that is amplified by individuals, organizations, and structures that seek to leverage that fear for political or social purposes.[36] The images produced by the media in contemporary American society frequently portray prison as a violent place, a veritable Hobbsian arena of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Often, individuals who are incarcerated for the first time, and feeling the full weight of the fear produced by such images, attempt to mimic what they have seen in the movies and on television. The result is a circle of violence and projected threat that weigh heavily within the incarcerated context. In his consideration of fear, and its ethical implications, Scott Bader-Saye (2007) delineates three false virtues that a fear-saturated environment naturally encourages: suspicion, preemption, and control. These are on full display inside prison walls. Each of these values, in addition to the fear itself, shapes how an incarcerated person engages in any social practice of art.

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[35] For a fuller description of the nervous system and the impact of both acute and long term trauma on it, see **Appendix B**.
[36] More on this will be examined when considering the political influences impacting an incarcerated person's experience of art.

Gernot, Pelowski, and Leder (2017) argue that art participation inherently involves an emotional stance infused with empathy. Murray Smith (2011) likewise posits that empathy is a critical component of any social practice of art, not only towards the art, but towards the – known or unknown, projected or actual – artist. The suspicion produced by fear within the incarcerated context naturally works against such empathy; it is hard to conceive of someone who is at once empathetic and suspicious. Such dissonance at minimum impedes the openness of the art participant to the art. Suspicion and defensiveness are an enduring reality of work with an incarcerated population, exacerbated by the use of fear as a tool, by both staff and other incarcerated persons, bringing to the fore the importance of developing safe therapeutic relationships prior to engaging in the therapeutic practice of art.

The fear that pervades prison not only calls forth suspicion, but also a desire for control. Incarcerated persons, as utterly disempowered and controlled persons, naturally seek to gain what power they can and exert whatever control may be had.[37] This tendency also works against many social practices of art, including the therapeutic practice. When engaging with a work of art, a subtle power dynamic is at work. The participant, by entering the world or space of the artist, and granting them the power of determining language, hands her a significant amount of power and control. The novelist, for instance, determines what the next chapter will unfold, and the actor places the observer in a position of reactivity.[38] Once again, the very nature of the incarcerated environment serves to inhibit the fullest participation possible. That is not to say, however, that even a limited engagement in the therapeutic practice cannot be successful or

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[37] Tangentially, this reality often goes a long way in explaining some of the more grotesque realities of incarcerated life. When an incarcerated person uses their own excrement in any number of different ways, it is often out of a desire to control something, even if the only thing over which they have power is their own excreta.

[38] Preemption, a sister virtue of control, likewise works against the inherent receptivity of art participation.

fruitful. Indeed, an increasing capacity to engage in the practice is a natural hallmark of an organic practice (Wolterstorff, 2015).

While a fuller examination of how the caregiver can counter the dolorous effects of fear on the incarcerated person will be offered in a following chapter, a brief consideration of how fear shapes art participation is in order. To participate in art is, for all participants, an act of bravery. While much ink has been spilled about the bravery of art formation and presentation, the recognition that the participant in art likewise acts in bravery has been less examined. Any act of dialogue, however, or authentic meeting is a potentially frightening engagement, and thus requires courage. In the exhausting emotional environment of a prison, finding that courage can be exponentially more difficult. This can limit the act of art participation as well as the willingness of the survivor to engage in the therapeutic practice. The importance of a solid therapeutic alliance and the establishment of an emotionally safe space between caregiver and survivor cannot be overstated in this context. Furthermore, the recognition of the need for courage by the caregiver, along with a healthy level of encouragement, praise, and reinforcement can help to mitigate the pressure against participation exerted by the inescapable fear within prison.

The Politics of Art

The dynamic between participant and artist described previously is not the only power dynamic at work for incarcerated persons engaging therapeutically with art. Some of the more significant political forces at work can be seen in my interactions with Thomas.[39] Thomas has ended the lives of many people, but he was incarcerated for only one of those killings. Prior to

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[39] As will be seen presently, the term political is not here used in the limited sense of referring only to governmental affairs, but rather in the broader sense, applying to the power dynamics between persons, groups, and structures throughout human society.

his incarceration, Thomas served in the United State Marine Corps. During his time in service, Thomas deployed to combat theaters on multiple occasions and engaged in combat on many occasions. "I was in the shit, chaplain, let me tell you," he would say. "I wasn't no sniper, but I often took the M40 and covered my squad. I had kills, man, some good and some bad. I wouldn't take none of them back, though, cuz that was my job and I wasn't going to let another Marine down" (TB, personal communication, January 4, 2019). With USMC tattoos covering his forearms and a high-and-tight haircut, Thomas, even while in prison, was every bit the Marine. "They didn't want me, and they dumped my ass, but I will always be a Marine," Thomas would say with defiance (TB, personal communication, January 4, 2019).

While stateside, Thomas was diagnosed with PTSD, a diagnosis he initially resisted. Refusing treatment, he dedicated himself to physical exercise. "I was a PT monster," he recalled, "I was in the gym every fucking day…doing it after fucking PT, because that shit was weak" (TB, personal communication, January 18, 2019). Unfortunately, Thomas' dedication to physical fitness eventually led to overtraining and a serious knee injury. The injury, coupled with the PTSD diagnosis, resulted in a medical discharge. Thomas felt lost, as he described "dumped" by the single organization with which he felt connection. He was unable to find employment, surviving for the first few months following his discharge on his disability payment.

Approximately eight weeks following his discharge, Thomas found himself driving in traffic. One aggressive driver cut him off on the onramp to a high way. Thomas honked his horn and was met with a hand gesture of disdain from the other driver. Thomas was enraged. "I lost it, Chap, that motherfucker was gonna die. I had my 1911 on me and as soon as I got the chance I pulled into the other lane and got alongside him. We were moving fast, more than 80, but I was able to put one in his temple. A hell of a shot, if I do say so myself" (TB, personal

communication, January 18, 2019). By the end of the day, Thomas was in police custody. He

would be convicted of murder and sentenced to 20 to 40 years. Though he had only been

incarcerated for a short period of time when I met him, Thomas had already established a

reputation as a polite and disciplined inmate. The respect for the chain of command and personal

discipline that had served him so well while in the Marine Corps was, for him, an asset while

serving his time.

Thomas' Unit Manager knew of his story and his status as a veteran. Knowing that I had

also served in the military, she suggested to him that our shared stories might lead to a helpful

connection for him. I began meeting with Thomas, and we very quickly established a rapport

around our shared service. During those meetings Thomas also described his love for country

music, and though that was not a shared taste, I decided to try and incorporate it into one of our

sessions. We began our session as we typically did, and I invited Thomas to listen to a song that I

had selected. After ensuring that he was grounded in his present space and time, I invited him to

listen to the lyrics and feel the music, in short to engage therapeutically with the song, a song that

was a tribute to military service.

While the song played, I observed a shift in Thomas' affect. His face hardened and his

gripped the arms of his chair. When he started to cast glances to the right and left, I decided to

end the song early, suspecting that Thomas was experiencing a trauma response. He was, but not

in the way that I expected. Thomas had remained grounded, but in the process of opening

himself to the music, he became acutely aware of a conversation partner that I had not given

significant conscious thought to. "They are listening, Chaplain, and I'm not saying that in some

paranoid way. They are always listening and watching, and I just hate that shit. I can't shake the

feeling" (TB, personal communication, February 22, 2019). What Thomas was experiencing had been described decades earlier by Michel Foucault (1995) as the unequal gaze.

Speaking of Eighteenth Century Paris, but eventually making application to the Bensian panopticon of a prison, Foucault describes this gaze as a means of exerting power and forcing those subject to such oppressive surveillance into a kind of solipsistic individualism. He writes:

> In order to be exercised, this power had to be given the instrument of permanent,
> exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it
> could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the
> whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted
> everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, a long, hierarchized network...
> this unceasing observation had to be accumulated in a series of reports and
> registers...a permanent account of individuals' behavior (Foucault, 1995, p. 214).

Were the act of observation merely to ensure accountability, or perhaps even security, then its influence on the observed might be muted, or at minimum understandable to them, but Foucault's far reaching insight is to label the gaze an instrument of power. As such, it forces the observed into a conscious state of subordination and individualizes them as the sole target of surveillance, even in the midst of a recognition of universal surveillance (Foucault, 1975). As Foucault (1996) states, "Here we have an apparatus of total and mobile distrust, since there is no absolute point [of reference]" (Foucault, 1996).

What in other contexts may be interpreted as acts of paranoia, or a symptom of PTSD, is an all too accurate understanding of the state of surveillance within a prison. Indeed, there are cameras covering nearly everywhere, phones may be monitored, and correspondence

examined.[40] Foucault surfaces that such an environment degrades trust between all participants, observed and observers (for all are observed), leading to a sense of isolation and disconnection. Engaging with art can become especially hard in such an environment, an environment in which power is leveraged to prevent personal connection. Thomas was unable to find a connection with the music, and to a lesser extent with me, because of his constant awareness of that surveillance. His already limited trust was diminished and his sense of personal capacity and responsibility was increased. Upon entering prison, he assumed a military bearing that he had not previously worn as a means of reminding himself that he was able to "take care" of himself, even in hostile situations (TB, personal communication, January 18, 2019). Having experienced disappointment, and perhaps even abuse, at the hand of unseen governmental authorities, his experience within prison walls matched the lesson seared into his mind by his previous trauma.

Of special interest in Thomas' case was his conscious awareness that he had been physically and psychologically shaped by government-wielded political power already, during his time in the Marine Corps (TB, personal communication, February 1, 2019). That, however, had been a willful choice on his part, while the power of the unequal gaze in prison was, in his experience, more coercive. He felt pushed to become, in his terms, "a sheep," (TB, personal communication, February 1, 2019) or what Foucault would call a "docile body" (Foucault, 1995). This sensation inhibited Thomas' ability to participate in music, and is a factor when considering how all incarcerated persons engage with art. The unequal gaze becomes another barrier to the therapeutic alliance and open, transparent engagement with works of art.[41]

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[40] One important penological concept is to instill in the incarcerated a sense that they are constantly under observation, as a mechanism of control.

[41] In later chapters, we will examine how to overcome some of these challenges.

Colorblind Art?

George was a fighter. In school, he was consistently suspended for fighting, before dropping out. On the streets, he was a fighter…constantly standing up for his block and for his crew. In prison, this was only amplified; George fought against staff physically and verbally at almost every opportunity. Speaking with George was often a fight for me, for he was held in a very secure, but also very noisy, housing unit. We often needed to raise our voices simply to be heard over the din and roar of the space and through the thick cell door. While it certainly took effort, those efforts were almost always rewarded. George was a clear thinker who understood his actions, and his motivations, and could provide insight not only on his own journey, but on the environment that shaped him. George was well aware of his status not only in the prison, but in society-at-large, and chosen to resist the application of what he would term "the power of the white man" (GL, personal communication, April 13, 2020).

George sensed deeply that he never fit into the mold that the various powers he faced in his life wanted him to fit into. "I'm not who my mama wants me to be…she wanted me to be a preacher. I'm not who my teachers wanted me to be…they wanted me to be a scholar. I'm not who the white man wants me to be…a beast of burden for their own profit. I am me and that's who I'm gonna be" (GL, personal communication, April 13, 2020). What George gave voice to was a reality that many people of color within prison experienced both prior to and during their incarceration. Michelle Alexander (2010), in her groundbreaking work *The New Jim Crow*, powerfully posits that the mass incarceration system of contemporary America largely parallels the Jim Crow laws of the American south as a means of subjugation and control (Alexander, 2010). The mass incarceration system, amplified by the war on drugs, supported by judicial decision, and equipped with military hardware, disempowers and disenfranchises people of color

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for the benefit of those in power. George recognized those forces at work, seeing that he was simply one of many experiencing the process of dehumanization and disenfranchisement. "I feel, with every passing moment, that my rights as a human being are being stripped from me," George would say with emphatic fervor (GL, personal communication, April 20, 2020). Seen from such a perspective, all staff, chaplains included, are tools of political oppression. While individuals may not see themselves as such, and may in fact work directly against such disempowerment, the perspective of incarcerated persons of color is often at odds with that. George made it clear to me: "You're just a tool, a puppet, chaplain, and the fact that you care about people makes it all the more effective, all the more insidious, and all the more odious to me" (GL, personal communication, April 20, 2020).

In addition to the political subjugation noted by Alexander, the centering of whiteness not only within prisons, but within educational systems and the broader culture, is also a force to be reckoned with. As Radd and Gosland (2018) identify, "desirablizing whiteness" is a discursive practice, which seeks to bring people of color into conformity with definitions of acceptability and desirability that are a reflection of the dominant, oppressive culture. As a student, George was subjected to pedagogical practices and expectations that were not well suited for him or his cultural context, but were rather an expression and extension of power by those in control. Inside of the prison, the image of the "model inmate" was likewise shaped by understandings that privileged and centered whiteness. George's actions were in response to those forces, grounded in a desire to resist at any cost.

While these dynamics play a significant role in how a caregiver in a prison provides their care generally, there are unique applications when it comes to the therapeutic practice of art. This begins with art selection. While this broad topic will be detailed in a later chapter, at this moment

it is important to note the power of bias to influence the caregiver's selection of artwork. In addition to a simple reflection of the caregiver's preferences, the art selected for participation may also unconsciously reflect the racial and power dynamic at play in the therapeutic relationship. Art can be a powerful tool for maintaining the status quo, including unequal power distribution and oppressive structures. Art can reinforce stereotypes and reflect all of the ills of a society. Artwork that does such things is not appropriate for therapeutic participation absent significant contextual work on the part of the caregiver. As will be seen in a later chapter, a poem used by the empowered to manipulate the disempowered can open up significant space for reflection if presented *as such*, but can be harmful if presented without the recognition of such realities.

As disempowered persons, subject to forces that seek to shape or control them, incarcerated people of color may find in the therapeutic practice of art, a space of equality and empowerment. While the power dynamics cannot be erased, the equality of action and speech at work in the practice itself, allow the participants to feel on an equal and empowered level, a space in which they can authentically speak their truth. Significant preparatory work may be necessitated, but the resultant dynamics are well worth the effort. Sensitivity to these forces should also be demonstrated throughout the process, ensuring that the therapeutic practice does not become simply another tool of oppressive control. The therapeutic goals of the practice should be closely examined to ensure that they do not center whiteness or project a vision of healing that is not in line with what is best for the survivor. As with any therapeutic intervention, the therapeutic practice of art should reinforce healthy power dynamics and aim to achieve goals developed mutually by the survivor and caregiver.

Henri Nouwen et al (2006), in his *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, provides an understanding of compassion grounded in solidarity that can well find application beyond Christian circles. While the power gap between incarcerated person and caregiver is broader than a typical caregiver-survivor dynamic, solidarity in purpose can still be found, and compassion expressed in those moments can be genuine and legitimate. Meeting on an equal plane, with an aim towards healing and justice, is a hallmark of therapeutic engagement. Standing in solidarity with an incarcerated person, the caregiver can help to provide the emotional and relationship environment in which the therapeutic practice of art can be safely and fruitfully engaged. Such actions, however, must be intentional.

Dostoevsky's Idiot proclaims, "The world will be saved by beauty."[42] The sentiment reflects an attitude not only towards beauty, but also towards art, that should not be accepted uncritically. While philosophy building on Platonic themes and embraced even by St. Thomas have often seen the Good, the True, and the Beautiful either as partnered perfections or reflections of the Divine Perfection, it does not necessarily follow that all things which are beautiful are also good (Wolterstorff, 2008). Any number of different examples could be called upon, both within the natural and the human world, which could demonstrate that beautiful things can work towards evil and injustice. The very power of beauty makes it an excellent tool for persuasion, for good and for ill. To assume, then, that art because it is beautiful will naturally lead participants to what is good, just, or healthy is unsafe and unwise. Art very often is in service to the powerful and oppressive. Language games are not value-neutral. They are socially-embedded and socially-created, and reflect the values of their milieu. Likewise, social practices

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[42] As a Christ-like figure, Prince Myskin may be offering a self-referential statement, insofar as Christ both reflects and projects Divine beauty. Such a soteriology, or even eschatology, would see a full consummation of the Divine-Creation dialectic, allowing the full beauty of the Godhead to permeate, infuse, and call forth still further beauty in theotic union.

of art are products of particular social contexts, including their value systems (Wolterstorff, 2015). All participation in art is culturally-located and value-laden. Engaging therapeutically, then, is a moral act. It holds the power to produce healing and justice, but only when engaged intentionally and informedly.

Conclusion

The framework for understanding art, or a certain subset of art, presented in this chapter involves three elements. The first, from the perspective of the observer, is that art participation involves engaging in a social practice, a *way* of seeing and experiencing the work. The second, from the perspective of the artist, is that art is a language game, a means of communicating that while not independent is largely shaped by the artist herself. The final element, which brings together the first two, is the surfacing of a language for constructive dialogue, what is posited as a theopoetics that provides the framework, language, and vocabulary for healing. In the following chapters, we will see this framework in action.

In Matthew 7:20, Jesus says, "ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς," "by their fruit you will recognize them." While the imagery of a tree and its fruit is used in the particular context to refer to persons, specifically ψευδοπροφητῶν, false prophets, an extension of the metaphor to include theological doctrines and philosophical systems is appropriate. Through careful analysis of the doctrine itself, the fruit of a belief can be uncovered and understood. That is part of what is intended in the following chapters. Simply put: does this practice achieve its desired purpose, namely to give space for survivors of trauma to find healing, and does the framework provide explanatory efficacy? The proposed answer, in demonstration, is yes.

Chapter III: Case Study #1: A Place Apart

The image of the stereotypical incarcerated person is informed by many sources, and can take many different forms. Often, visitors to state prisons are surprised by the characters they meet, finding in them people far different than they expected and that the media portrays. Those who meet Raymond, however, find an individual who meets many of today's stereotypical descriptors of a prison inmate. He is large, standing more than six feet tall, and has a physique honed by years of strength training. He stands like the boxer he once was and his affect frequently projects anything but friendliness, with a furrowed brow and intense eyes peeking out above a significant, though graying, beard. His shaved African-American head reveals a savage scar and his aggressive demeanor leaves little question that it was hard-earned. Raymond is a physically intimidating presence who has also, through years of practice, learned to project an image of someone not to be messed with.[1]

Raymond is intense, without being angry, a victim of grave injustices who initially refused to see himself as such, but internalized that reality, which shaped his self-understanding in powerful ways. Born in Frankford, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1948, Raymond was one of many children to a single mother. Often struggling for basic necessities, Raymond attended school, but dropped out during his junior year. After "hustling" for a few years, unable to find steady employment or a livable means of income, Raymond was drafted into the United States Army at the age of twenty-one (RG, Personal communication, March, 26, 2018).

After enduring a few weeks of basic combat training, Raymond was given advanced individual training, preparing to serve as an infantryman. Seemingly moments after the completion of that training, Raymond found himself in Southeast Asia, but soon discovered that

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[1] Ironically, Raymond will attest that his efforts in this regard are aimed at avoiding those very situations in which he needs to demonstrate his capacity for violence or fend off those who would exploit him.

while he was assigned to an infantry unit, he would not be serving as an infantryman. Rather, Private Raymond was selected to serve in supply, and a supply sergeant took him under his wing. Very quickly, however, Raymond discovered that his primary purpose in the unit was not to provide beans and bullets, but rather other items considered important. Raymond learned the rules of the drug trade, profiting handsomely while dealing to service members and becoming a supplier back home.

Raymond did well for himself and for his supervisor, earning promotions and attaining the rank of staff sergeant. That success, however, did not shield him from the realities of war. Though not serving directly as an infantryman, Raymond did engage in combat operations and was exposed to the devastating consequences of those operations both on his comrades and the local population. One day, Raymond had enough. Frustrated with one of his fellow soldiers, angry words escalated and a fight ensued. After a brief period of confinement, Raymond was sent to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

The next two months in Hawaii were a blur for Raymond. He spent two months inpatient, receiving intensive treatment for posttraumatic stress and substance abuse. "Well," Raymond would say, "I would go to meetings in the mornings and find a way to get high at night…ha ha!" (RG, Personal Communication, March, 26, 2018). At the conclusion of those two months and with very little notice, Raymond was informed that he was going home. Put on a plane with all of his belongings, a footlocker and duffel bag, Raymond landed at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Handed a bus ticket to Philadelphia, Staff Sergeant Raymond was now Mr. Raymond and on his own.

Raymond found himself relying on the skills he had begun to develop as a teenager and which were refined during his time in Vietnam. He began dealing drugs, but many of the adaptations that served him so well in "the bush," seemed to be maladaptations in a civilian

environment. Raymond was using as much as he was dealing, and before long, he found himself facing a judge. Offered a plea agreement, Raymond avoided jail time while agreeing to inpatient civilian treatment. That treatment lasted less than two weeks, however, when Raymond walked away feeling that such a program "would never work, because they hadn't been where I been, seen what I seen, and did what I did" (RG, Personal communication, June 18, 2018).

Raymond recounts what happened a few days later: "I was sleeping at my cousin's crib, when all of a sudden bang and here they come. Like the fuckin' Viet Cong, ready to scoop my ass up. But I wasn't going quietly. If those motherfuckers wanted me, then they was gonna have to pay the price" (RG, Personal communication, January 8, 2018). By the time the skirmish had concluded, a number of officers had sustained injuries, and Raymond was facing a host of felony charges. Convicted, Raymond was sentenced to fifteen to thirty-two years in a state correctional institution. Raymond served twenty-seven years before he was granted parole, a fifty-year-old man who had spent more than half of his life inside a penitentiary.

Raymond's experience on the street was not a positive one. Living in veteran's housing and separated from his meaningful relationships, he tried to focus on the habits that had served him during his incarceration. He worked out relentlessly and, when he was unable to find employment, tried to pursue income as a boxing trainer and instructor. Sadly, the therapy, groups, and medications that had been available to him while incarcerated were not as readily available on the outside, and Raymond once again found himself self-medicating and without a means of income to support the habit. Without support, resources, or conceivable options, Raymond began a series of robberies that once again landed him in court. As a parole violator, Raymond was sentenced to complete the remaining five years of his original sentence, then serve an additional seventeen to fifty-four years.

That was twenty-five years before I met Raymond in my office. During those years, he had faced a whole gamut of incarcerated experiences, in his view both positive and negative. "The hardest thing I faced inside was also something I was glad I was inside for," Raymond reflected, "facing the cancer. I don't think I woulda beat that out there, and I barely beat it in here, but at least the government paid for my chemo" (RG, Personal communication, July 15, 2019). At age sixty-two Raymond was diagnosed with prostate cancer. In the months that followed, Raymond endured surgery and chemotherapy, and in that season he reconnected with the Islamic faith of his childhood. Raised in a family with a nominal connection to the Nation of Islam, Raymond found that Orthodox Sunni Islam, with a particular Salafi influence, provided him a framework for understanding the world and a brotherhood.[2] Raymond beat cancer, and emerged with a healthy body and faith.

Even at seventy-six years of age, Raymond remained a powerful and intimidating presence, communicating clearly that he was not particularly inclined to conversation. However, several friends of his, fellow members of his Islamic community, had prevailed upon him to talk with me. As a respected member of the incarcerated community, he had been informed that he would receive the Institution's support for parole with one important caveat. He needed to complete a single required program, a formality really, and something easily accomplished. That done, parole would almost certainly be assured. The only thing standing in Raymond's way was his refusal to complete the program. Raymond was choosing to stay in prison; choosing to end his days behind prison walls.

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[2] While not an emphasis here, it is worthwhile to observe that religious communities provide both healthy community and rituals for incarcerated persons. This was certainly true for Raymond who found strong connections with his fellow Muslims. Raymond would report that the ritual prayers throughout the day "pulled me through those hard times like a locomotive pulls a train" (RG, Personal communication, RC, September 9, 2019). For a helpful discussion, see Baldwin, J. (2018). *Trauma-sensitive theology: Thinking theologically in the era of trauma*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Personas

In prison and throughout the criminal justice system, the story of who one is and what one has done is pliable, shaped for the circumstances and purposes at hand.[3] When initially arrested, an individual may not be fully conscious of such activities, but certainly by the time legal counsel has been introduced and legal proceedings have commenced, incarcerated persons have begun to attend to their projection, how others view them, as well as their story, specifically the story of their crime. While at the conclusion of a criminal case the court has generally determined what the official version of a criminal offense is, that official version does not necessarily carry significant weight for the incarcerated person (Zehr, 2005). Their immediate concern is survival during initial reception into the facility where they will serve their sentence.[4]

Often those who are sentenced "upstate" have little to no experience of the state prison system: its culture, values, practices, and how to navigate within it. Their view is shaped largely by media presentations of places filled with extreme violence and intimidation, a Hobbsian state of nature (Hobbes, 1651). While such is not the case, many choose to face that possibility by shaping their story and their persona for such a *bellum omnium contra omnes*.[5] Even when confronted with the reality of their new culture, some continue to perpetuate a hardened facade for a variety of reasons (Zehr, 2005). As such, the media plays a role in increasing the likelihood of violence, adding fuel to a vicious circle.

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[3] This is not to claim that this is a reality exclusive to prison. In almost every context, individuals shape their narrative for a purpose, largely determined by the goals. This is far from a moral judgement, those purposes may well be noble or they may be manipulative, but the moral value of such narrative adjustments, or even inventions, is more properly determined by the purpose and mechanism of expression rather than the objective correlation of the story with the so-called historical facts.

[4] Generally, a person standing trial will be held in a county correctional facility. Once sentenced to state prison, they will then be sent to a state correctional facility for initial reception and evaluation. Once completed they will be sent to the facility where they will serve at least the initial tenure of their sentence.

[5] Worthy of note is the reality that incarcerated persons not only shape their personas for fellow incarcerated persons, but also for staff, this writer included. How an incarcerated person presents him or herself to a corrections officer is likely to differ significantly from how they present to a chaplain or psychologist.

Beyond the influence of media, the trauma inflicted on incarcerated persons by their context is a reality, reducing the safety every person within a prison feels. From juvenile insults to systemic depersonalization, the level of emotional safety within a prison is extraordinarily low. This elicits a defensive posture, a balance between standoffishness and aggression that is found in a plethora of ratios. Though the term fear would rarely be used, it is a reality.[6] Raymond is a perfect example. Everything about him projected defiance and aggression, from his physical stature and posture to his facial expressions and affect to his tone of voice and choice of words. As he aged, safety became an increasing concern, magnifying his fear and resulting in an even more hostile demeanor. His defensive shell was significant, even amongst incarcerated persons, so any modality or approach would first need to be prefaced by a significant amount of alliance-building and rapport establishing. Even then techniques that would circumnavigate his defensiveness and posture were still required.

An Aesthetical Aside

The arts have long been appreciated for their capacity to transport the individual away from their present circumstances and into another world, a world shaped by both the artist and the participant. This is a reality not lost on incarcerated persons, who frequently employ music, literature, and cinema to find relief or an escape from their present circumstances. Thus removed from their present reality, they may experience a heightened sense of safety and achieve an increased capacity to reflect on themselves, their circumstances, and their world. While grounded in their bodies and the present, incarcerated persons can simultaneously enter into the world of the artwork while also using the piece as a lens on their present condition.

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[6] To use Thomist terminology, that fear inhibits personal growth because it restrains the *pulsilla anima*, the small soul, and keeps it from growing into the *magna anima*, great soul, of a mature individual (Barron, 2015).

The hypermasculine, aggressive, trauma-inducing environment of a men's prison screams

danger.[7] Amygdalas can be quickly overwhelmed and overtaxed (van der Kolk, 2014). The

conscious and subconscious eschewing of emotional experience and processing feeds the dis-

integration of the brain's left and right hemispheres (Seigel, 2009). Accessing one's emotions,

growing conscious of bodily states, and expressing one's needs, all of which are crucial

components of trauma recovery, become even more daunting and frightening. However, within

an emotionally stable and safe space, the use of image-rich poetry, can provide a space for

incarcerated persons to lower their defenses. By allowing the author's creative skill to build

another world, a place apart, and entering into it, it is possible to lay to the side certain triggering

elements of the present environment.

With Raymond, the use of artwork proved fruitful, but with an additional unexpected

result. Our shared reflection on poetry strengthened his horizontal integration, essentially the

bonding of neural connectivity between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, and thus his

relational connective capacity. He began to find comfort in certain connections and faced the

uncertainty of his present life with greater confidence (Seigel, 2009). One particular poem, along

with its *Sitz im Leben* and use as political propaganda, opened his mind to a reality that while

experienced and experienced to the extreme, had not theretofore found concrete expression. It

was by way of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, that Raymond realized

that a path of restorative justice, informed by social justice theory, would bring him to a place of

reconciliation not only within himself but with the condemning, marginalizing society around

him.

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[7] While it would be natural to focus on the physical danger of prison, the emotional and relational dangers are also a
lived reality for incarcerated persons.

The Charge of the Light Brigade

I

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

   Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!

Charge for the guns!" he said.

Into the valley of Death

   Rode the six hundred.

II

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"

Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew

   Someone had blundered.

   Theirs not to make reply,

   Theirs not to reason why,

   Theirs but to do and die.

   Into the valley of Death

   Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon in front of them

  Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

Boldly they rode and well,

Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell

  Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,

Flashed as they turned in air

Sabring the gunners there,

Charging an army, while

  All the world wondered.

Plunged in the battery-smoke

Right through the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian

Reeled from the sabre stroke

  Shattered and sundered.

Then they rode back, but not

  Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon behind them

   Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

While horse and hero fell.

They that had fought so well

Came through the jaws of Death,

Back from the mouth of hell,

All that was left of them,

   Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!

   All the world wondered.

Honour the charge they made!

Honour the Light Brigade,

Noble six hundred! (Tennyson, 1854)

The selection of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* did not come from me, but rather was suggested by Raymond himself. Perhaps the most famous phrase of the poem, "theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die," rose in conversation and upon learning that it was part of a

poem, Raymond asked if it could be the topic of future reflection. I provided him a copy of the poem and we agreed to discuss it the following week.

Raymond entered my office in an animated state that next week, stating that he had not only read the poem several times, but had researched the poem's context in the prison library.[8] To Raymond, though a lovely piece of literature, the poem itself was an abomination: "It's a flex, chaplain, a fuckin' flex by the man…just swingin' his dick around while he keeps the people under his heel. Fuck that and fuck that guy" (RG, Personal communication, RC, June 18, 2018). In exploring his reaction further, it became evident that while the actual historical setting of the poem and the details of the historical battle may have matched Raymond's impression in some limited ways, he was engaging in a great deal of projection. For Raymond, the soldiers of the light brigade were depersonalized conscripts, forced to fight a battle they knew was unwise by foolish commanders, and who bore deep wounds of combat while others exploited them for their purposes. Most galling to Raymond was the notion that the poem would be used to glorify not the combatants, but rather the empire. He imagined a scenario in which the officers of the empire used the blood-soaked story to recruit further "grist for the mill" precisely by displaying for those recruits just how terribly they would be exploited (RG, Personal communication, June 18, 2018). The powerful displayed their naked power before the powerless, using the display to further their dehumanizing marginalization (Braithwaite, 1999).

Raymond would go further, expanding beyond his military experience. Indeed his time in the ghetto of Philadelphia and within the criminal justice system likewise fit the mold of a person stripped of power, dignity, and autonomy, being exploited and killed for the seemingly opaque

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[8] In brief, the poem was composed by the then poet laureate of the United Kingdom, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, after he learned of the disastrous battle of Balaclava, one engagement of the Crimean War. Though Tennyson's intent may be unclear, popular sentiment embraced the poem as a way of extolling the heroic virtues of the British cavalrymen.

purposes of the powerful. "Chaplain, I have never been this angry in my life," Raymond said, "Not when my platoon got shelled, not when my boy got shot, not when they humiliated me on the block. I feel nothing but rage, but I don't know who I'm ragin' at. I've done wrong, but I've been wronged, but I do not know by who, and that makes me even madder" (RG, Personal communication, June 18, 2018). The task of identifying the who of Raymond's rage, of understanding the systems that held him in place, and of finding a way forward would be our work in the weeks and months that followed.

Restorative Justice – Identifying Stakeholders

One of the primary preliminary tasks of restorative justice is to identify the stakeholders effected by a particular crime (Zehr, 2014). These stakeholders are typically categorized as (1) the victim or victims, (2) the offender or offenders, and (3) the community (Maglione, 2017). While both the law and criminal justice hold idealized understandings of these stakeholders, rarely do those stereotypes hold. As Maglione (2017) observes, those idealized understandings almost never obtain, particularly when ontological and ethical boundaries are strictly enforced (p. 28). While the primacy of the victim or victims and their rights seems appropriate, the claim that serving the needs of the victim and the offender are mutually exclusive should not be assumed (Zehr, 2005).

Maglione (2017) delineates a distinction between state and community, arguing that the state, though often operating in exclusively retributive ways, can serve as the facilitator of restorative justice practices without standing as a stakeholder *per se* (p. 27). This moves in a helpful direction by diversifying one's understanding of community, identifying that members of that community play different roles in crime, both positively and negatively, and in ways that cannot be neatly defined as offender or victim (Johnstone, 2011). Perhaps terms such as

contributor and inhibitor can be helpfully used to further clarify participating members of the community.[9] This is simply to observe that not all community members are passive observers, but may have, directly, indirectly, or systemically, contributed to acts of crime.

Furthermore, the boundaries of these categories are indexical, culturally located and defined, and should be considered semipermeable. Dualistic thinking is simply insufficient when addressing the complexity of restorative justice (Rohr, 2016). Individuals can, to varying degrees, stand within two or all three of those categories (Johnstone, 2011). Often identifying that complexity and establishing effective descriptions requires significant effort, but effort that is well rewarded (Lederach, 2005). Fluidity is a reality for all human structures and systems, and rigid categories and categorical assumptions, fail to do justice to the needs of each person represented in the criminal justice system.

The ethical assumptions of many restorative justice efforts are likewise questionable (Polizzi, 2011). The community, especially when broadly defined, and the state share in guilt and cannot for the purposes of reconciliation or restoration be assumed to be innocent or even sufficiently innocent to effectively facilitate restorative justice practices (Johnstone, 2011). As Michelle Alexander (2010) powerfully argues, the criminal justice system in the United States is not primarily tasked with enforcing justice at all, but rather with creating and controlling a subcaste within American society (p. 8). Seen through this lens, the task of restorative justice broadens (Johnstone, 2011).[10] One possible solution is to add a step in the standard restorative justice process prior to any conciliatory steps between victim and offender, save what has occurred during court proceedings. This step would include an analysis of the systemic issues

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[9] Perhaps the category of oppressor would also be a helpful addition.

[10] This, of course, is not to argue that there are not clear cut cases in which individuals are incarcerated for committing crimes against innocent victims. The community may be more or less culpability in those cases, but to assume innocence is to choose willful ignorance.

related to the case, not to excuse action or to engage in a purely exculpatory exercise, but to bring the offender to a place where he or she is better prepared for and capable of restorative practice (Johnstone, 2011). Such a step may increase the positive outcomes of restorative justice programs and diminish some of the causes of negative outcomes (Choi et al, 2012).

Viewing the appreciation of systemic injustice as a prerequisite, or perhaps simply preparatory work, for restorative justice programming assumes an individualistic approach. While claims can validly be made by large classes of individuals, based on a variety of factors, or even crimes themselves, the particular circumstances of each offender are more relevant.[11] Furthermore, this injustice-informed approach implies a blending of the therapeutic and restorative approaches to justice, generally. While not granting many of the disempowering assumptions of many therapeutic responses to crime, this approach embraces the power of therapy and therapeutic interventions to broaden the openness to and efficacy of restorative justice programming (Bazemore, 1996). This is especially true when one considers the complexity of the mental health and justice issues at play within the life of someone like Raymond.

Raymond experienced economic injustice as a child, socio-political injustice as a draftee, cultural injustice when wrestling with addiction and mental illness, and legal injustice during his sentencing and incarceration. The treatment Raymond received while incarcerated exacerbated this moral inequity through its focus on social functioning rather than moral action (Foucault, 1975). This left Raymond feeling morally superior to those who oppressed him. This moral inequality must be addressed before restorative justice work can effectively take place. That

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[11] Once again, Michelle Alexander's work is informative. The "War on Drugs" has disproportionately affected young males of color, resulting in felony drug convictions. As such, a broad understanding of those categories may inform how one prepares individuals who fall within those categories for restorative justice programming.

process was one part of Raymond's work that began when he entered the world of *The Charge of the Light Brigade.*

Restoring Justice

Raymond clearly identified with those who had been sacrificed and exploited by the powerful in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem, further resonating when the poem itself was used as a tool of social coercion and control. He viewed himself as marginalized and stripped of power and autonomy. Reduced as such, Raymond struggled to conceive of himself as a person, an autonomous self with the power of choice and action (Yoder, 2005). He was, in his own mind, merely a pawn or tool to be controlled by others, though those others could not be properly identified. He was a scapegoat, the target of a community filled with anger, angst, and guilt, seeking some semblance of propitiation (Hardin, 2017). Entering into the world of the poem, however, allowed Raymond to visualize himself in a different way. He saw himself riding a war horse, sabre in hand, charging against the enemy cannons. He heard, however, not the roar of cannons, but the affirming cheers of society, a far cry from his actual return from Vietnam.

This visualization was helpful for Raymond. First, the sound of the affirming community in his ears was a reminder of the power of relationships and community. He was not alone in the charge, nor was he alone in the present. As a committed member of the Islamic community, Raymond experienced a sense of affirming brotherhood, a place of connection, appreciation, and value (Baldwin, 2018). Indeed, Raymond was seen as a leader within that community, filling him with a sense not only of responsibility, but also of worth.[12] Furthermore, his place atop the steed, sword in hand, was an empowering position. Though commanded and coerced, his particular

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[12] One place of work for Raymond, however, was to move beyond a correlation of value with productivity. Trapped in the mindset of late-stage capitalism, Raymond often assumed that he only held value if he was able to produce or contribute, rather than centering his value within his personhood.

actions were within his control. He could direct his horse and utilize his weapon. He could win honor for himself. Without discounting the intrinsic injustice of the circumstance, Raymond was able to find autonomy and self-worth and begin to move away from the disempowered, marginalized place the mass incarceration system had readied for him. Trauma reduces in a significant way the sense of autonomy felt by its survivors, and in many ways restoring that sense of autonomy is the journey of trauma recovery and healing (van der Kolk, 2014). This is exacerbated by the criminal justice system, when frequently the law and the court envision a sense of autonomy and freedom that is beyond what is experienced by most offenders (Zehr, 2005).

Raymond's improved vision of himself allowed him to survey more securely the situations he had experienced throughout his life. This was initially expressed in grief. Raymond had experienced hardship and pain, loss and injustice, but it was not until he saw himself as a person of value that he was able to grant himself permission to value the losses he experienced. Though complex and polymorphic, Raymond was able to work through his grief and emerged from the process with improved connections within his faith community.[13] Though he remained physically intimidating and largely standoffish, the depth of Raymond's relationships increased and he reported an increased sense of satisfaction.

Raymond was reporting and demonstrating improvement in many of the domains commonly associated with post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi, 2017). Having embraced an improved vision of self and having moved through a substantial amount of grief, he felt a growing sense of empowerment and autonomy. As his bonds with his fellow Muslims improved, he found both greater satisfaction and encouragement from his faith. He felt more capable and

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[13] A great deal could be offered about grief in an incarcerated setting, and Raymond's grief specifically, but that falls outside the scope of this work.

more willing to consider choices that he had previously considered "off the table" (RG, Personal communication, July 15, 2019).

Ironically, this expanding sense of power would be the source of his next great challenge: the renewed reminder of his disempowered state. Having moved up the autonomic ladder from the dorsal vagal system to the sympathetic branch, Raymond was feeling energized, but increasingly triggered and agitated (Dana, 2018). He wanted to act, to find justice, not simply to fight against the machine, but to make lasting change. Raymond would say, "I gotta fight for these brothas…change the system and make sure what was did to me won't be done to them (RG, Personal communication, July 15, 2019). This willingness to look beyond himself and advocate for others seemed a positive development, but it came at a cost (Herman, 2015).

Raymond's initial action was to start a letter-writing campaign. Not only did he begin to write himself, but also he encouraged others to do so as well. The enthusiastic response by his fellow incarcerated persons was encouraging for him, instilling in him a sense of hope for change. That hope, however, soon received a blow, and that in two forms. First, Raymond's letter writing campaign did not bring about the change he had hoped for in the short run. In fact, even months later, it did not bring about a response at all. Not a single letter he sent out or was sent out by others resulted in a return communication of any kind. The prison, however, did respond. Raymond was summoned to the security department and questioned. Concerns over his "organizing activities" and "increased activism" were expressed and untold but evident in the conversation were concerns about the possibility of self-radicalization. "You see, Chap," Raymond would later say, "not only am I a black man in America, but I'm a Muslim. I'm dangerous and scary, and these guys had to keep me under wraps" (RG, Personal communication, February 25, 2019).

Conclusion

"When I was in Vietnam, I never knew where Charlie was. Those fuckers could hide. Sometimes, all we could do was patrol. We would walk around and wait for the motherfuckers to shoot, hope our asses didn't get blowed off, and then return fire. That's what I'm doing now. I can't find allies, but I can find enemies, and I can make sure they flag theyselves" (RG, Personal communication, March 26, 2018). It was not until Raymond took positive steps on his own that his ability to identify those who wished to exert coercive power over him revealed themselves. This led to a sorting process within Raymond, identifying those who held and exercised that power appropriately and inappropriately (van Prooijen et al, 2014). Thus informed, Raymond felt that he was making a difference, if only by identifying and bringing to light the structures that required darkness to operate (Alexander, 2010).

Raymond's case presents a challenge to typical restorative justice thinking. Though his burglaries had identifiable victims, by the time he was positioned to begin the process of restoration, those businesses and business owners were no longer available. The community had moved on. If restorative justice truly is "a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future," then the remaining stakeholders in need of reconciliation were none other than Raymond and the powers which oppressed and marginalized him (Marshall, 1999, p. 5). The implication for the future, at least in Raymond's mind, was the prevention of such abuse and control, and that required the identification of not only the mechanism, but also the impetus of oppression.

Restorative justice is process-oriented (Kuo et al, 2010), while always embracing its core values and purpose, healing the damage inflicted by injustice (Johnstone, 2011). While the

results of Raymond's actions may seem insignificant, his engagement with the process allowed him to feel a sense of satisfaction and growth. Furthermore, identifying the relevant parties is a significant step in peacebuilding. Before stories can be heard and people can be authentically seen, before peacebuilding can begin in a substantive way, faces and hearts must come forward for reconciliation. This cannot happen in the dark (Lederach, 2015).

When those faces are hardened and the hearts cold, it takes significant moral exertion, imagination, and courage to move towards justice and reconciliation. Raymond demonstrated those characteristics. He made the brave choice to share his story and voice. That bravery was found, in no small part, when he entered into a place apart, the world of a poem. Thus initiated and facilitated, it was restorative justice practices that provided the arena for significant breakthrough.

Chapter IV: Case Study #2: A Sacred Space

I heard him before I smelled him. I smelled him before I saw him. I saw him before I

heard him. When I heard him, the Holy permeated our conversations in a way that was almost

palpable, for me and for him. It was clear from the outset that Carl A. had grown a great deal

during his time of incarceration but there were still challenges before him. What I did not know

then is that Carl's story paralleled the stories of many incarcerated persons. In the pages ahead, I

intend to take a careful look at Carl's story, examining many of its facets with an eye on how his

story not only demonstrates, but also helps to elucidate, the corporate art participation that takes

place in a prison's RSD.[1] Recognizing the holistic nature of human beings and communities and

denying the existence of purely discrete categories, this chapter will nonetheless examine Carl's

intrapersonal work and his interpersonal work, both in terms of his relationship with individual

chaplains and with his faith community.

A prison RSD is an interfaith community that seeks to provide incarcerated persons with

opportunities to practice their faith, engage in spiritually-enriching activities, and develop life-

giving and sustaining relationships both with RSD staff and fellow incarcerated individuals.[2]

When examining the practices engaged within such a context, it is valuable to hold in tension

both the universal aspects of spiritual practice as well as the particular enriching value of a faith

community, rite, or activity. Without delving deeply into such distinctions, it is simply

noteworthy at the outset that certain religious practices find great commonality across traditions,

prayer for example, and that certain goals are embraced by a variety of religions, such as internal

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[1] The focus of this paper is on the work Carl did within the context of RSD's, or chapel communities. This is not to deny that other venues provided environments for growth and healing, though an examination of those practices and the interrelation between them and those of his faith community is beyond the purview of this work.

[2] While there is a wide diversity in RSD staff, almost all chapel communities are comprised of incarcerated persons, incarcerated staff, volunteers, particular faith group leaders and professional chaplaincy staff.

peace and self-awareness. Particular faith traditions, such as the wide variety of paths that are

corporately considered under the rubric of Native American spirituality, can also diverge from

those shared religious goals and practices in ways that can be helpful for particular practitioners.[3]

Carl, as a student of Native American spirituality, benefits not only from those common practices

and goals, but also from those attitudes, activities, and aims unique to his community. Therefore,

any examination will result in particular as well as general conclusions, both of which can be

valuable for those who wish to learn and apply them.

The Interpersonal Work – A Sacred Relationship

Carl was a member of the Native American community, committed to the principles and

practices of the Red Road, which include drumming, ceremonial chant, smudging with sacred

herbs, and partaking in a ceremony, which he referred to as a "hoop."[4] This ceremony typically

includes smoking sacred herbs from a sacred pipe (Cheryl Germer, Navajo Nation, personal

communication, May 27, 2019).[5] When he first sought me out, Carl had been incarcerated for

almost seven years and was preparing to present documents and sit before a board of individuals

who would determine if he would be paroled from prison.[6] This is a time of heightened stress for

any incarcerated person. The threat of trouble, of receiving a reprimand or write up, is felt more

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[3] A salient observation is that an RSD, composed of a variety of religious traditions, forms a unique *polis* in and of itself. The peaceful existence of such a community can stand as a witness in and of itself to reconciliation, peace, and hope. For a helpful examination of interfaith prophetic communities, see Bader-Saye, S. (2005). *Church and Israel after Christendom: The politics of election*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

[4] When considering religious practice within an incarcerated environment, it is helpful to remember the words of Barbara Brown Taylor: "There is no such thing as *religion.* There are only religious *people*, who embody their faiths as differently as dancers embody the steps of their dances" (Taylor, 2019, p. 215). Religious practices must be adjusted for security and timing considerations while being practiced within prison walls.

[5] The act of "smudging" is a practice employed by several faith traditions within my prison. For Carl, smudging included an act of burning sacred herbs, which were then fanned by a sacred feather in such a way that his entire body was surrounded by the smoke. This symbolized, and in a real sense achieved, the removal of negative energy and thoughts, allowing him to live in peace with Creator.

[6] This is, of course, an incredibly simplified description of the parole process. However, I believe it is a true representation of how the process is seen from the perspective of incarcerated persons.

acutely than at other times during an incarcerated experience.[7] Carl had noticed within himself that it was becoming more difficult to control his responses to people when they presented in what he experienced as a domineering attitude. He was alarmed at the thoughts that flashed through his mind as well as the thought processes that led to them. Carl described his experience: "When these guys, these CO's, talk to me like I'm a kid, like I'm an idiot, like I'm not a grown-ass man, I just get so pissed. Like more than regular pissed, and I don't feel like I have any skills that are up to the task of keeping me out of trouble, and I can't have that. I've gotta get home" (CA, personal communication, March 15, 2018). Thus began a relationship that would cover a great deal of territory and encompass his journey of growth, personally, interpersonally, socially, and spiritually.

After complementing Carl on his insight and capacity for introspection, we began a dialogue about what had sustained him and allowed him to navigate his first seven years of incarceration so successfully. Carl was sentenced to state prison following his third conviction for DUI. Though familiar with county jails, this was his first experience with the state prison system and its unique culture.[8] Apprehensive, confused, and struggling with inadequate coping skills, Carl did his best to stay under the radar. He assumed that violence was a necessary relational dynamic, breeding a sense of fear and anxiety (Lederach, 2005). For his first few days, he did not often leave his cell and did not participate in any programing. That changed when, on

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[7] Formal misconducts, when a staff member completes paperwork documenting a violation of prison rules, which may or may not result in some form of punishment, damage an incarcerated person's chance at parole. While not strictly true, it is commonly believed that misconducts incurred later during a term of incarceration or closer to the date of a parole hearing are perceived more negatively by the parole board, and thus hurt an individual's chance at parole more significantly.

[8] While generalities across prisons and prison systems can be dangerously inadequate, several factors lead to significant cultural differences between county jails and state prisons. County jails typically do not house incarcerated persons longer than 24 months and include individuals "fresh off the streets." State prisons, by contrast, include people with sentences longer than two years who have already undergone trial and sentencing. Most incarcerated persons report that state prisons are "calmer" than county jails.

a seemingly random occasion, a chaplain stopped by his cell. Demonstrating a level of personal concern beyond what he had experienced anywhere in the prison system up until that point, she invited him to talk. "We didn't talk about religion or faith or anything like that. She just wanted to know how I was doing and what help I needed. It felt really good to talk with someone who cared about me, and when she encouraged me to check out the chapel's schedule, I knew that I would try and get involved in a program she led" (CA, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

In the weeks and months that followed, Carl developed a deepening relationship of trust with that chaplain who, it turns out, was a leader of the Native American community. Religion and theology, however, were not initially topics of conversation. Rather, as Carl recalls, "She was the first person who was interested in my story because it was about me, not because she wanted details for a report or because she was doing her job. Honestly, she was the first person I told the truth to, about everything, and that felt really good" (CA, personal communication, June 7, 2018). Grounded in the safety of that relationship, Carl started to feel the courage necessary to engage with other incarcerated individuals. He began attending the Native American ceremony, which soon became a focal point of his week. "I looked forward to ceremony. I looked forward to smoking the pipe. I scheduled my whole week around that one service, and I would look forward to it for days" (CA, personal communication, June 7, 2018).

The story of Carl's initial introduction to Native American spirituality, through his close bond with a chaplain, is hardly unique and speaks to a reality that takes place in jails and prisons across the United States. There are a number of characteristics of that relationship that help to explain the growth Carl experienced very early in his incarcerated experience. Like many incarcerated persons, Carl was initially filled with fear. Though he had experienced county jails, he was unfamiliar with the culture – the informal and unspoken rules of state prison. This

unfamiliarity, coupled with the violent and frightening images of prison produced by contemporary culture and leveraged by courts of law, left Carl unwilling to engage with his fellow incarcerated persons. As Scott Bader-Saye observes in *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear* (2007), those in positions of power will often manipulate images and narratives in order to magnify fear for the purpose of control (pp. 11-24). In contemporary American culture, frightening and even traumatic visions of prison, expressed through documentaries and dramas alike, serve to encourage citizens to follow civil laws. However, those same images and narratives exaggerate the fear experienced by incarcerated persons, especially during the initial stage of their confinement.[9]

Confronted with a host of new threats, threats expanded and exaggerated by society and the criminal justice system, newly incarcerated individuals recede into their dorsal vagal system: isolating from relationships, shutting down emotionally, and potentially experiencing disassociation (Dana, 2018).[10] In that state, they are neurobiologically impeded from taking the steps they need to take in order to co-regulate and re-story their experience. Often, it takes the initiating action of another in order to begin and sustain that process, one who recognizes that they are operating within a traumatizing, conflict-defined space (Lederach, 2003).

The first motion in Carl's movement towards connectedness came from a chaplain. Anne B. was an experienced chaplain, familiar with the dynamics of fear, who sought to express her concern and care by visiting new inmates where they felt most comfortable, on their blocks and at their cell doors. This action, especially by a woman, sends a silent message that was received

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[9] In a challenging circle, incarcerated people are also consumers of the media's portrayal of prison life, often seeking to imitate characters and practices they observe. Thus, while most prisons do not match the violent landscapes portrayed in movies and television, they are growing more like them as inmates act in line with their shaped beliefs about incarcerated life.

[10] For a fuller explanation and examination of the polyvagal theory, see **Appendix C**.

by Carl: that of concern, compassion, and solidarity (Nouwen, McNeill, & Morrison, 1982).[11]

Anne was willing to place herself in an uncomfortable position on behalf of Carl, an act that he

received and that helped to establish a relational connection.

Having taken the step toward relationship, Anne also demonstrated two significant

qualities that the preceding narrative did not fully capture. First, Anne made it very clear to Carl

that she was not in a position to judge or condemn, but stood with him on an equal footing, as

people who had made mistakes and could learn from each other. Carl recalled: "Unlike a lot of

staff, she didn't come with a superiority complex. She was humble and not once did she ask

about my crime or try to look down her nose at me" (CA, personal communication, June 7,

2018). Anne made it clear that one goal of their relationship would be to examine where Carl

was in need and help to meet those needs, but that did not mean that Anne was one who stood in

a spiritually superior position.[12]

In addition to her humility and refusal to stand in a position of authority, Anne was

careful to present her authentic self. The prison environment is one in which manipulation is a

daily reality. Incarcerated persons present themselves in inauthentic ways for a variety of

reasons: to gain power, to achieve protection, to deflect criticism, and to deny pain.[13] Likewise,

staff will often avoid honesty, transparency, or authenticity in an effort to protect themselves,

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[11] The prison that Carl was initially housed in was a "male" prison, comprised of cisgender men, transgender men, and transgender women. As such, female-presenting staff face the likely threat of sexual harassment and intimidation when visiting housing units.

[12] Anne well applied the statement of Rowan Williams: "The point of leading someone to confront his or her weakness and need is not to enforce discipline or cement patterns of spiritual superiority and inferiority" (Williams, 2012, p. 19).

[13] Incarcerated persons frequently create for themselves an idealized self, projecting strength, courage, and invulnerability. This persona often takes control of any former sense of self and creates a shadow self in a way analogous to Jung's theory of self-development. The facing of this process and the integration of that shadow self is an important growth process for incarcerated persons. For a helpful treatment, see Au, W. & Cannon, N. (1995). *Urgings of the heart: A spirituality of integration*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.

both physically and emotionally, from incarcerated people who are seen as a threat. Within such an environment authenticity has an even greater power to help establish and cement relationships (Buber, 1988). While Carl admitted that he did not initially match Anne's authenticity, she did not allow that to deter her, and Carl eventually grew in his feeling of safety, allowing him to reveal more and more of his authentic self.

Anne focused on two tasks in the initial stage of her relationship with Carl, both of which helped to establish the environment in which he could work to find healing from trauma and pervasive fear. The first of these tasks was simply to bear witness. Anne unflinchingly listened to Carl as he told his story of incarceration. While the stories that Carl would initially tell were often surface-level and occasionally intended to project a certain persona, Anne's primary task was to stand as a witness to Carl, and his story only secondarily. Standing in solidarity and witnessing his pain, Anne was laying the foundation for Carl's later trauma work (Herman, 2015, p. 175).

Anne also extended a hand of hospitality. As Bader-Saye (2007) observes, a culture of fear such as a prison encourages the development of suspicion. Suspicion serves to protect the individual from "the other," by giving a (false) sense of security grounded in clearly delineated sects. One communal counter practice to suspicion is hospitality (Bader-Saye, 2007). Anne invited Carl, expanding on her initial act of solidarity. Having come to his space, she invited him to join her in a different context, a safe context in which Carl could begin to develop relationships and engage in spiritual practices that could simultaneously help to dispel excessive fear and allow him to find healing from his trauma.

The Interpersonal Level – A Sacred Community

Carl accepted Anne's invitation, and soon it was the relationships formed within that faith community that sustained him. He remembers: "It was the Native American community that helped me. Participating in the ceremonies: the prayers, the chants, the drum, the singing, all of it just soothed me and I felt at peace with Creator and Creation and myself" (CA, personal communication, April 20, 2018). Not long after he had finally felt settled into that community, Carl was transferred to another state prison. He quickly sought out and integrated into the Native American community there. "Honestly, that's what helped me the most. I knew I was coming to a new jail and that would be tough, but the brothers in the circle really helped. They welcomed me and showed me the ropes so to speak" (CA, personal communication, April 20, 2018).

Carl's integration into the Native American community was helpful in several different ways. To Carl, the act of seeking out community was a step that he could take tangibly in order to care for himself. It left him feeling empowered, acting in a way that left him feeling that he was taking charge of his own well-being. This act of seeking out community can be viewed as an act of preemption, a value generated within a culture of fear (Bader-Saye, 2007). However, this preemptive act is non-violent, an act of peacemaking. Thus, the energy generated by his fear or discomfort in the new environment was directed towards something positive, indeed something that could help establish the relational foundation necessary for his recovery and healing (van der Kolk, 2014). Once Carl felt connected to his new community, he was well positioned to learn about the new culture he was immersed in. The community provided him with a safe space from which he could evaluate the new dangers, and the resultant fears, that he faced, gauging their immanence, likelihood, and magnitude (Bader-Saye, 2007).

The practices of Native American spirituality center on communion with the spirits of the world and the ancestors of its members, ancestors who experienced significant trauma (Cheryl Germer, Navajo Nation, personal communication, May 27, 2019). The experience of Native Americans since the arrival of European settlers is well known. It is a story of physical, cultural, and religious genocide and the source of significant historical trauma (Yoder, 2005). Many of the traditions and teaching of contemporary Native American spirituality reflect the community's response to that trauma. Writing of how historical trauma has shaped African American spiritual practices, particularly dance, Karen Baker-Fletcher (2006) points to the reality that the practice of dance, as in Native American communities, often rises in response to hegenomic and oppressive power, such as Carl's community faced and continued to face (p. 43).[14]

Through rhythmic drumming, chanting, dancing, and the scent of sacred herbs, Native American ceremonies bring their participants into a greater awareness of their own bodies (van der Kolk, 2014). They report a greater capacity to identify their own sensations and a clearer understanding of their internal landscape, evidence that they are accessing their emotional brain (van der Kolk, 2014). Members feel grounded and connected to each other and to the created world, focusing on their present experience (van der Kolk, 2014). This regular practice increases a sense of bonding and security between community members, allowing them to release their emotions in a controlled and safe way (van der Kolk, 2014). The release of muscle tension, through the practices of dance, provide a language in which the dancers are able to express

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[14] In making this observation, I am not suggesting that Native American spiritual practices should be disparaged or critiqued as such, in a manner similar to the critique leveled against certain segments of Evangelicalism by Marie Hoffman. Rather, I suggest that precisely because Native American spiritual practices have been shaped by significant historical trauma they are (perhaps uniquely) well suited for those who have survived and are surviving trauma, such as incarcerated persons. See Hoffman, M.T. (2016). *When the roll is called: Trauma and the soul of American Evangelicalism.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

themselves, particularly feelings of helplessness and the frustration of constraint (van der Kolk, 2014).

Carl did more than simply attend events or programs. He entered a community.[15] The individuals he met, prayed and chanted with, danced among, and joined in communion with were people that walked with him throughout each day. When the opportunity came to request a new cellmate, community members sought opportunities to cell up together. When possible, they walked to and from the Inmate Dining Room together, spent time together in the yard, and worked out together in the gym. Perhaps for the first time in his life, and likely for the first time in prison, Carl was able to spend time around individuals that did not trigger his amygdala, people around whom he felt comfortable, calm, and safe (van der Kolk, 2014). Especially during times of worship, but also during other basic activities of life, Carl was able to settle into himself and notice that settling in others, demonstrating improved neuroception (Dana, 2018). In that mutual space, a sense of an other began to emerge for Carl. He remembers, "for the first time, I started to experience Creator and not just that Creator exists, but that he cares about me and he wants me to do something. That my story makes sense" (CA, personal communication, January 31, 2019).[16]

Having moved from a state of isolation and disassociation – and having been energized by that fact – Carl had been motivated, but without a clear sense of direction. That motivation led him to connect with the Native American community and to experience the significant power of that connection. Finding the capacity to regulate emotionally within the boundaries of those

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[15] Grounded in a story of historic trauma, the very structures of the Native American community demonstrate a resistance to totalizing and an embrace of the politics of justice and compassion in a way that significantly parallels some of the communities of the Hebrew Bible, as described by Walter Brueggemann. See Brueggemann, W. (2018). *The prophetic imagination*. (40th anniversary ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

[16] Carl's recollection matches the anthropology of Martin Buber and is indicative of the authenticity and trust that was built between members of the Native American community (Buber, 1988, p. 76).

healthy relationships, Carl was now positioned to create a story, a challenge that theretofore had been neurobiologically impossible (Dana, 2018). The liturgy of the hoop, captured in prayers, chants, and songs, gave him a language to speak, a language that was capable of capturing his experience, what John Caputo calls an impossible poetics, and which we identify as a *theopoetics* (Horan, 2011). Reflecting on her experiences of healing, Rebecca Ann Parker (2001) eloquently captures the reality: "Hearing one another into speech gave rise to a... a community of life" (Brock & Parker, 2001, p. 111). Shelley Rambo (2017) describes it differently, capturing another facet of the communal experience. In sharing their stories, each member breathed sacred breath into one another, "as wound calls to wound," finding a story of shared woundedness.[17]

That story was something he was able to reflect and focus on and utilize in two significant ways. First, he was able to construct a narrative of his present reality that took the basic data of life and formed them together in a way that linked with a metanarrative and allowed him to find satisfaction, beauty, and meaning.[18] It also allowed him to look back into his past and weave a tale of meaning. Carl chose to see his past through a lens of Divine guidance, believing that Creator's hand had brought him to his current place. This act mirrors the constructive understanding of providence laid out by Scott Bader-Saye. Carl's story, or rather the interweaving of his story of the present and his story of the past, allowed him to experience hope for a future in which the Divine is seen as protector and provider, a future of health, safety and peace (Bader-Saye, 2007).

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[17] In her work, Rambo describes a veteran's organization, Warrior's Journey Home, with a support group that incorporates much of what Carl's Native American hoop employed, including smudging, drumming, carefully controlled speaking roles, and a palpable sense of the presence of their forebears (Rambo, 2017).
[18] In that way, Carl followed a process and experienced results similar to Victor Frankl's experience of a concentration camp. See Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's search for meaning*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

The path that Carl pursued laid the groundwork for his trauma recovery and focused on peace: peace within himself, peace with Creation, and peace with his Creator. That peace, in Carl's mind, required reconciliation. Carl describes his state of mind at that time: "I was looking to be forgiven. I knew I had sinned against society and against creation. I had taken this thing [alcohol] that was a gift from Creator and I abused it" (CA, personal communication, September 21, 2018). In a way analogous to Pamela Cooper-White's (2009) understanding of Christian forgiveness, Carl's experience of forgiveness and reconciliation with the Creator was not grounded in his work, but in receiving (p. 10). This experience required a community; once Carl felt bonded closely with others, he felt that a close bond with the Divine was possible. It was the affirmation of his fellow community members, expressions of their care and concern, that began to shape Carl's self-image, an image of a Self that *could* be at peace with the Creator.

The Intrapersonal Level – A Sacred Part

All seemed well, until Carl was called to his counselor's office and informed that the process of preparing for his parole hearing was about to begin. He was going to be staffed. Many fears, sources of uncertainty, and anxiety began to press on him. It was then that he noticed his irritability and his self-described "immaturity" (CA, personal communication, September 21, 2018). His Native American chaplain encouraged him to talk with me. After a few weeks of careful consideration and reflection, Carl made the brave choice to schedule an appointment.

Early in our conversation it became evident to both of us that there was a parallel between those situations on the outside that led to his problematic drinking and the current situation he was facing. "I would get stressed out, about money or about my woman or about some other shit, and then I would deal with a home owner and they would talk to me like I didn't know how to do my job. Like I was a fucking idiot. I would just spiral after that, and I would end

up drinking" (CA, personal communication, September 21, 2018). It was not obvious to Carl, though, why the skills that he had developed, the relationships within his faith community, and the spiritual practices that he regularly engaged in were no longer sustaining him as successfully as they had in years past. The prison environment had not changed. The challenges that every incarcerated person faced were still challenges he faced, but something was now different.

It was a product of his own brave introspection that helped Carl to see the dynamic at work. Reflecting on the times of his problematic drinking and during the times that he struggled to remain in control, Carl noticed that he felt like a teenager, that his internal dialogue rang in his ear like the words of an immature version of himself. Carl recalled, "I felt like the kid they said that I was. I felt like a punk teenager who just wants to fucking hit somebody or go get trashed or both" (CA, personal communication, September 21, 2018). This insight, the product of deep and careful self-reflection, was pivotal for Carl. Having grounded him in the safe environment of my office, free from the distractions and stress of the prison, I invited him to consider that part of himself that felt like it was "speaking up" during those times that he most felt out of control.[19]

Employing a construal grounded in Internal Family Systems, I encouraged Carl to visualize that part of himself as a person, a part of himself, with whom he could converse.[20] This was admittedly a challenge for Carl, who repeatedly commented, "This is some weird shit, Chaplain, but I'm willing to go with you on this journey" (CA, personal communication, September 21, 2018). With time and some education, Carl grew more comfortable and was able to speak with this protector part.[21] To his surprise, this part was a teenager, someone who spoke

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[19] It is worth noting that "free from the distractions and stress of the prison" is a relative phrase. My office, especially compared with counseling offices outside of prisons, is Spartan, uncomfortable, and noisy. However, relative to the typical experience of an incarcerated person, it is luxurious, comfortable, and quiet.
[20] For a description of Internal Family Systems, see **Appendix D**.
[21] Prior to engaging in this behavior, I provided Carl with education regarding Internal Family Systems: specifically preparing to see his part as a firefighter, as one who was seeking to protect him. The process presented here, and my

with the same words and attitudes that he felt in those moments when he was least in control. Reflecting on his experience at that age, Carl remembered a series of traumatic events, all of which involved a parental figure flooding him with verbal then physical abuse. That part did not initially know Carl's biological age, and expressed incredulity that he was a grown adult, capable of handling painful situations and equipped with the skills necessary to navigate even difficult environments.

Over a series of weekly sessions, Carl grew in his capacity and comfort. He was able to engage with this protector and noticed other parts as well. Carl began to check in with his teenaged part, seeking to reconcile with him, provide him with the reassurance he often needed, and remind him of support structures in place and skills that he had learned. This awareness enabled Carl to notice when his internal dialogue would shift from his Self to that part, and he developed practices that allowed him to dialogue with his teenaged part in those moments after or, preferably, within those situations that might trigger the part before he reached the point of feeling out of control. Carl integrated this visualized construal into his religious practice, often allowing himself to connect with his parts during ceremonies. He found that the rhythmic drumming and chanting allowed him to find clarity, seeing many of his parts and communing peacefully with them. Carl was able to avoid trouble in the prison, and he felt confident going before the parole board.

In working with Carl, two significant observations led me to the decision to utilize an understanding of Self using the terminology and practices of Internal Family Systems. The first was the indication Carl expressed that his desire to act in response to provocation was an immaturity grounded in a part of himself other than his primary self-understanding. This

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summary of the education provided is truncated, in order to clarify the work that Carl was doing specifically with regards to his coping with the incarcerated experience and the challenge of facing parole.

immature response felt alien to him, which is indicative of a part not fully governed by Self (Schwartz, 1999). Even more powerfully, Carl was able to recognize in his responses feelings that paralleled his teenaged experience. He described his immaturity as feeling like a teenager or "acting like I used to act back then," a time when Carl's problem drinking began to develop (CA, personal communication, September 21, 2018). That problem drinking could be understood as a protective practice, a coping mechanism that Carl developed as a teenager. For Carl, it was important to recognize the origin of that part and to accept that the part only had the skills developed to that point in his development. Viewed as such, he was able to feel compassion and even love for the part, embracing its intent to protect without endorsing the means. This point of view allowed him to do the hard work of integration.

In addition to the parts work, polyvagal theory, specifically Deb Dana's visual explanation of a ladder, was helpful for Carl as a way of understanding his incarcerated experience (Dana, 2018). He resonated with the description of isolation and disassociation that results when one acts within and out of the dorsal vagal system. He likewise grew in appreciation for the flood of energy that resulted when he climbed the ladder into the sympathetic nervous system in response to his initial connection with Anne. The emotional regulation and confident use of coping skills that came from the highest rung of the ladder, dwelling within the ventral vagal complex, was initially only a passing reality for Carl, who eventually grew in his capacity to remain there.

In addition to providing insight into his experience, the ladder metaphor also allowed Carl to identify what was happening in his body. He began to sense within himself when he would ascend or descend the ladder and anticipate the feelings that would be associated with the shift. Once Carl had reached the place that he lived primarily within the ventral vagal complex,

it became easier for him to recognize when he stepped down into the sympathetic nervous system. The rush of energy and the desire to fight or flee became an expected experience that he could redirect. In fact, Carl remarked, "I know it's coming. I know I'm going to feel energy surge through me. I'm going to feel it in my heart and my muscles are going to get tense, and I know that when that happens I need to find one of my brothers or start praying. Sometimes I start dancing and I burn up that energy while feeling more in control and connected with Creator" (CA, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Carl's ability to self-regulate and settle onto the highest rung was a major step forward.

Conclusion

Carl's story did not end there. He faced more and greater challenges in the weeks and months to follow, but equipped and encouraged within a supportive community, he was able to face them with confidence. Through acts of generosity, he would achieve a final level, that of social engagement in pursuit of restorative justice (Bader-Saye, 2007). The foundation for that work was the inter- and intrapersonal work described here; the environment for that work was the prison RSD. Carl's story is a story of courageous work done in a challenging environment, a story of hearing and being heard, of seeing and being seen, of smelling the aroma of the Holy along the path to healing. It is a journey that has been – and continues to be – aided and encouraged by the work of chaplains, who walk along that path and, in so doing, shape a sacred space.

Chapter V: Case Study #3: Resistance as a Healing Posture

"FUCK YOU!"

"Yes?"

"That's right…FUCK YOU…and FUCK your GOD…and FUCK this SHIT…ALL THIS SHIT! Y'all can kiss my black ass up in this bitch. I'm the motherfucking king. I'm the motherfucking ruler. I'm the motherfucking King Kong" (BA, personal communication, August 29, 2017).

Thus began one of the more fruitful religious journeys I have had the privilege of witnessing as a prison chaplain. Before that journey could begin, however, I had to decide how to react to Bella A., who had chosen a very public venue – an outdoor walkway between housing units – to offer these words of commentary, spoken, or perhaps spat, in my direction. The prevailing wisdom of corrections, a product of its history and culture, is to match aggression with aggression and never to show weakness on any level. Staff should respond with overwhelming force, be it verbal, physical, or legal. Such a blasphemous, incendiary, and angry outburst should not go unchecked.

But chaplains are different.

Chaplains bring a different narrative to the incarcerated experience. Chaplains bring confident vulnerability and a sense of peace grounded in a story that transcends any particular tale of incarceration. So, in that moment, I had to respond differently. I chose in that moment a narrative of hospitality, of invitation, as an act of generous preemption in the face of suspicion (Bader-Saye, 2007). I invited Bella to sit down with me in a few days, to talk about her experiences and her anger, and to see just why God was such a tyrant in her mind (BA, personal communication, September 1, 2017).

Bella accepted my invitation, and a few days later we found ourselves in my office, sitting in close proximity, though not directly face to face. What began in that space and carried on in the weeks ahead was the groundwork that any healing relationship requires. I actively listened and stood as a witness to her pain and trauma (Herman, 2015). I chose to be non-anxiously present as an ally, sitting in solidarity with her (Nouwen, McNeill, & Morrison, 1982). We worked hard to establish safety, and I worked hard to establish a therapeutic alliance in which I was neither superior nor an authority (Williams, 2012). As a transgender, African American female, Bella did not experience physical safety within the incarcerated environment, and emotional safety was in short supply as well. Through hard work and respect, including a demonstration that I would not attempt to evangelize, convince, or engage in any spiritually violent behavior, we built together an environment that allowed the façade of anger and hate to come down, and for Bella to begin to speak her own truth, her own reality, and her own feelings (Taylor, 2019).[1] The turning point of that work came as we considered a painting more than four hundred years old: *Crocifissione di san Pietro* by Michelangelo Merisi de Caravaggio (see Figure 3).[2]

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[1] This is not to say that her fellow incarcerated persons did not attempt to do so. In fact, several ham-fisted attempts to "introduce her to Christ," "lead her to salvation," and "invite her into a relationship with Jesus" proved spiritually counterproductive.

[2] In addition to showing Bella the painting, I shared with her briefly the pious fiction of Peter's crucifixion on which the painting was based.

Figure 3

The Crucifixion of Saint Peter

There is a great deal in this masterpiece worthy of commentary. Even more is elucidated when the piece is set within its historical, artistic, and physical contexts. However, that information was not available to Bella. She experienced the painting exclusively in my office, on a computer screen.[3] Bella's focus, which provided insight and established the context for our conversations was on the face of St. Peter (BA, personal communication, February 10, 2018).[4] Her experience of his face provided a lens through which she could examine her own emotions. Lacking the internal structure and safety necessary for describing her own emotional reality, she was able to project onto St. Peter and describe there, from the point of view of his narrative, some of what she was feeling. Eventually, we were able to move beyond this technique, but the work done in that space provided the foundation we needed to achieve that.

In this chapter, we will consider Bella's projections onto St. Peter not simply as a particular therapeutic social practice of art, but as a way of understanding spiritual journeys within an incarcerated environment. Furthermore, we will reflect on how questions of theodicy weave into the tapestry of life in an incarcerated context and how the stance of resistance is an effective positioning for those who continue to live in a trauma-inducing place. One important note: Bella's projections will be considered as an essential element to this particular social practice. While the aesthetic framework previously presented focuses on dialogue, even trialogue, projection involves the participant taking a dominant voice. This practice does not silence the artist, but places the participant in a position of authority and strength, a reality that can prove therapeutically beneficial.

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[3] This, of course, is a substantially different experience from someone who is familiar with early Baroque painting experiencing the piece from within the Chapel of the Assumption in the left transept of the Parish Basilica of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome.

[4] St. Peter's face was not her exclusive focus, as will be seen later, but it was her focal point.

Figure 4

The Crucifixion of Saint Peter (detail)

Fear

Bella's first reaction, felt primarily in her gut, was to see in the furrowed brow and wrinkled nose of St. Peter a sense of fear (BA, personal communication, February 9, 2018). This sense was enhanced by the painting's dark background (see Figure 4). She saw St. Peter as someone surrounded by darkness and gazing into it. The moment of death was not, in Bella's eyes, one of light and transfiguration, but one of darkness and terror. This observation was, in a substantial way, a projection of Bella's own feelings of isolation and subsequent distress. Disconnected from significant relationships and without a community to call her own, Bella lacked the relational context so helpful in evaluating and processing fear (Bader-Saye, 2007). The future, as well as the current environment, was filled with unknown variables and events; those who truly hold power operate away from the perception of the incarcerated individual (Foucault, 1975). This, along with the very real dangers of prison, breeds a pervasive sense of dread.[5]

Fear is an enduring reality for all incarcerated persons and any spiritual journey undertaken within that environment must attend to it. Any spirituality that denies, downplays, or ignores fear will soon be eschewed as unhelpful, unrealistic, and unattainable. Rather, it is those paths which accept anxiety as a legitimate factor which will prove fruitful. This is not to say that those traditions which see faith, love, and other virtues as counterpoints to fear do not have helpful elements, but the incarcerated environment demands a contextualization in which dread is not eliminated, but rather understood and experienced within proper limits. Fear does not disprove the existence of faith, nor does faith eliminate entirely all experiences of it.

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[5] It should go without saying that incarcerated environments, like society at large, are more dangerous for transgender persons than for cisgender individuals, a reality that is never far from Bella's mind.

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It can be well-argued outside of prison that the absence of fear is not itself a virtue (Bader-Saye, 2007). Inside of prison, dread is an undeniable reality and felt experience that ought not to define one's life, but does serve to color every interaction, practice, and choice. Bella felt this as oppressive and pervasive, and recognized that eliminating fear was neither possible nor preferable. Rather, for her, emotional regulation became more possible as she examined the source of her fear, and befriended those parts of her which so quickly raised alarms within her amygdala. Through guided introspection during the initial phase and reflective meditation in later phases, Bella was able to identify those protector parts within her personality that acted to defend her against perceived threats. Recognizing and embracing the intention and purpose of those parts, namely to preserve and protect rather than to harm and isolate, helped her to accept her trauma responses as such (van der Kolk, 2014).

Furthermore, grounding work within her body allowed her to remain present more effectively during those times she felt triggered. In an incarcerated spiritual journey this can be a double-edged sword. Remaining present helped Bella to avoid disassociation, but it also redirected her to a place that was not entirely safe, either physically or emotionally. However, in grounding and regulating, Bella was able to remind her parts that she has resources at her disposal that were unavailable to her at the time of her traumas. Coupled with a reminder of her relational matrix and their support potential, Bella found the capacity to regulate and ground in the present. Moving from the dorsal to the ventral vagal complex was a spiritual experience for Bella (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). Bella would report a feeling of spiritual ascension, and this practice soon became central to her spiritual understanding and development.

Resistance played a significant role for Bella as she internally wrestled to find regulation. Inevitably, she experienced moments of terror while in her cell, accentuating feelings of

powerless and constriction. When she did not disassociate, Bella often experienced indifference, detachment, and passivity, a hallmark of traumatic experience (Herman, 2015, pp). Internal practices of resistance, including self-talk and imaging, helped Bella to "break loose" from the sense of "being stuck," helping her to integrate the experience and avoid some of the more dolorous results of her traumatic terror (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). The nature of the environment, however, meant that trauma could not be avoided entirely, and so further practices of resistance and redemption were necessary.

Trauma

Experiencing Caravaggio's portrayal of the crucifixion led Bella to pose questions about Peter's self-understanding of the event. How, Bella wondered, did St. Peter think about his own execution? This question naturally led to a conversation surrounding the story of St. Peter's interaction with Christ, as recorded in John 21:15-24, specifically verses 18 and 19: "Very truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk where you pleased. However, when you are old you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and will carry you where you do not please. (He said this signifying with what sort of death he will glorify God.)" (author's translation). Bella rejected the notion that any execution could glorify God. She felt deeply that any god that would demand physical violence in order to be glorified was not worthy of whatever glory may have been generated.

However, the concept that Jesus would tell St. Peter in advance of his execution resonated with her (BA, personal communication, March 23, 2018). Rather than a gift, Bella saw this prophetic comment in terms of her judicial experience. Jesus, the judge, hands down to Peter a sentence of death. "The death warrant wasn't signed," Bella said, "but the sentence was handed down. This motherfucker was gonna die, and that's a shitty thing to do" (BA, personal

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communication, March 23, 2018). She saw the unspeakable trauma in St. Peter's face. For Bella, the idea that St. Peter would spend his life expecting his own execution was literally unspeakable. Looking closely at St. Peter's mouth, one sees only an empty space, which symbolized in Bella's mind a lack of speech (BA, personal communication, March 23, 2018).

Incarceration is a traumatizing experience, and many within prison can speak to significant trauma prior to their incarceration. For a plethora of reasons, those who survive trauma lack the capacity to access language or cohesive narrative (Dana, 2018). Thus, a primary task of trauma recovery, in all contexts, is to build access to emotions, differentiate bodily states from emotions proper, and put words to those emotions and memories (van der Kolk, 2014). Yet, the incarcerated environment provides disincentive to express emotions or to tell one's story of trauma.

Spiritual practices and religious communities, however, can provide relationships, environments, and structures that encourage that expression. The practice of lament, for example, whether directed towards a divine authority or to the world at large can serve as an emotional release valve of sorts for those who experience their emotions as building and boiling within them (Boase, 2016). Lament, for Bella, went beyond a mere expression of pain; it provided her with a language to express her rage, and an opportunity offer a public protest (Swinton, 2007). Physical actions within religious rites and ceremonies, including dance, music, and meditative movement can help to calm the arousal that is a near-constant reality. Bella related that she felt empowered when, through her personal songs, she expressed her anger at the world and at the structures within civil society that oppressed and subjected her (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). Within the safety of a counseling relationship, chaplains can work with incarcerated persons to overcome the silencing Bella saw in St. Peter and felt within herself.

Dehumanized Disempowerment

While Bella's primary focus was on St. Peter's face, she also reacted to his legs. Caravaggio's painting depicts St. Peter's feet nailed to a cross, while three individuals work to place it upside down into the ground. One of the individuals, wearing a red cloak and with face partially obscured, reaches around St. Peter's legs to help hoist the cross into place.[6] While it is possible to see the action of the red-cloaked man in a purely functional or artistic manner, Bella interpreted the action viciously.[7] She understood the man as holding St. Peter's legs, binding him unnecessarily to the cross, an act of coercive power against an imprisoned and non-resisting individual (BA, personal communication, February 16, 2018). Incarcerated persons are disempowered persons, just as Bella saw St. Peter. She commented, "I'm not my own…I'm just their fucking property to do with as they please" (BA, personal communication, February 16, 2018).

Any spiritual journey must take these realities into account and enable individuals to flourish within those confines. What Bella knew through her experience is that, like St. Peter, she was held against her will and pressed painfully by occasionally sadistic staff. If one's spiritual narrative cannot account for such evil, or provide resources to allow for flourishing while oppressed, then its utility within an incarcerated environment is exceedingly limited. However,

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[6] One could well interpret this painting as an antithesis to pietas, an artistic rendering of the Blessed Virgin holding the crucified Christ. Karen Mains (1997) develops this image well as one of comfort and healing in her work *Comforting One Another: In Life's Sorrows*. In contrast to the healing power and efficacy of the image developed in that work, the *Crocifissione* images physical touch, but emotional and spiritual separation: a stark vision of trauma in action.

[7] This interpretation belies a history of trauma; survivors of trauma frequently interpret even neutral actions as oppositional and threatening. This extends to their interpretations of human reactions, body language, and facial expressions.

those practices that encourage safety within one's own physical body, and the resultant emotional regulation, can be priceless gifts for incarcerated persons.[8]

For Bella, evil was definitive in her understanding of herself and the world around her. For her, the reality of absurd and exaggerated evil and pain was incompatible with an omniscient, omnipotent, loving being. Though not a logically rigorous formulation of an atheistic argument, it was a compelling line of thought for her.[9] As Peter Kreeft (2011) writes, "the strongest case against God comes… from the billions of normal lives that are full of apparently pointless suffering" (Kreeft, p. 10).The continual nature of the dehumanizing environment she existed in reinforced her beliefs about the impossibility of a theistic worldview, but it did not foreclose her capacity to shape meaning and find purpose.

> I don't know about some fucking story of everything…I don't think there is a
> story of everything. I think that's bullshit. There's just me and my story and you
> and your story, and if I can pretend all this shit means something, then good for
> me. I know what I have to do, but I don't have a fucking clue what you have to
> do, and it's none of my business to try and find out or tell you what to fucking do.

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[8] I often use the work of fifteenth-century Indian poet Kibar, entitled "Visiting Holy Shrines," to capture this concept:

> If you circumambulated every holy shrine in the world
> ten times,
>
> it would not get you to heaven
> as quick
>
> as controlling your
> anger. (Kibar, 2002, p.220)

[9] This argument has existed for millennia, but to attend to it as a philosophical argument rather than a natural outgrowth of Bella's trauma is to miss the therapeutic point and obscure the clinical goal. Chaplains who attend too quickly to such thinking without an appreciation for the trauma that produces it err in a way that can stunt spiritual development. This is not to say that all atheistic belief is grounded in trauma. Philosophically, such a position is an example of the generative fallacy, and psychologically it likewise fails to account for the data.

Not my job. Not my problem. I've got my meaning, my truth, my story and that's

good enough (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018).

Spiritual was a qualitative, not an ontological, ontotheological, or metaphysical, category,

and was understood in a manner similar to the spirituality of Sam Harris (Harris, 2014). As an

oppressed, exploited, and abused woman of color, the patriarchal harm of theistic religion was a

lived experience for Bella (Johnson, 2002). This was true not only for her, but for countless

people within her social circle, people who experienced explicit and overt abuse as well as petty

indignities. Combined with the problem of pain and evil in the world, theism was simply not an

option to be considered, but spiritual experiences could still be had, largely within the context of

resistance against the totalizing, dehumanizing system of the oppressive empire (Brueggemann,

2018). In that resistance Bella found the space to be fully human to herself and to experience a

transcendent state of being that focused on loving herself (Au and Cannon, 1995).[10] John

Swinton (2007) develops the concept of resistance as a useful posture in his *Raging with*

Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil, having observed that philosophical

theodicy, rather than providing an encouragement to those faced with pain, suffering, and trauma

multiplies evil and exacerbates the pastoral challenge.

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[10] The practice of accepting and loving oneself is significant for all people, but especially powerful and life-giving for transgender individuals.

Figure 5

The Crucifixion of Saint Peter (detail)

Exploited

Bella also noticed that the wounds in St. Peter's feet were not bleeding to a great extent. This is also true of his left hand, which is pierced with a nail, but is not visibly bleeding at all. This sanitized portrayal of execution stood out to Bella, who understood the painting as a depiction of torture (BA, personal communication, February 16, 2018). St. Peter's execution, then, would be at once public and sterilized. "That's what the public wants. That's what the government wants. A nice fucking show, a death without shit stains and pissing yourself. Neat and tidy so that everybody can feel good about themselves, except the motherfucker getting nailed. Ha…he's just fucked" (BA, personal communication, February 16, 2018).

That Bella, an African American, should resonate with the subtle communication that incarcerated persons are property, exploited and used by the powerful and privileged, is hardly surprising. Many religious traditions have failed to account for the bodies of African American women, the victims of historical injustice, exploitation, and trauma (Baker-Fletcher, 2006). Bella also pointed out the posture of the figure in the bottom left of the painting, observing that were the figure female, particularly an African American female, it would be viewed as provocative. As a Caucasian male, however, it is not perceived as such (BA, personal communication, February 16, 2018).

Subjects of injustice have many needs: to be seen, heard, valued, and believed among them. Even before the process of restoration, reconciliation, or justice can begin, victims must be witnessed (de Gruchy, 2002). As Melissa Harris-Perry (2011) attests, women of color do not stand on a level playing field, but rather exist within a crooked room, erasing histories and distorting images, both from the perspective of those outside and those trapped within their limits (p. 36). Thus, while the needs of all stakeholders must be evaluated and considered, one's

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perception of those needs also require close examination (Zehr, 2015). While not sufficient in itself, religious communities can helpfully contribute to this task by providing conducive environments for such justice work, resourcing witnesses, establishing goals and understandings of justice and reconciliation, and providing a cosmic framework larger even than the political arena. This cosmic framework allows for rooms of varying crookedness, and surfaces those areas of interconnectedness, spaces within which justice work can flourish (Rambo, 2017).

Bella's self-understanding of herself and her situation is set within a political context. She understands herself and her bodily state to be a public expression of coercive power in a manner similar to the "l'éclat des supplices," *the brilliance of torture* of Michael Foucault (Foucault, 1975). Significantly, however, while the "droit classique," *classic* law, of French royalty demanded atrocité (Foucault, 1975, pp. 43, 59), contemporary American society demands a sanitized vision of incarceration to assuage corporate guilt.[11] Docility is still a highly valued characteristic and further serves to mitigate public shame. Bella, recognizing this, grew in her capacity to accept the inherent exploitation of incarceration by using that exploitation as a mirror, a reflection, and act of resistance against the society and structures that sought to exert ultimate, coercive control (Foucault, 1975). This positive reframing of embarrassment, shame, and pain left Bella feeling empowered by those very forces that sought to exploit, disempower, and damage her.[12]

Bella also found that simple acts of small kindness, offered to others who shared here incarcerated state fed within her a sense of resistance, a firming resolve that the abuse she

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[11] It may be argued that the Constitutional prohibition of "cruel and unusual punishment" as a political statement of the American ethos holds strong analogies to Pilate's hand washing.

[12] One example of this came during the regular occasions when Bella would be strip searched. During that process, she would be forced to lift her penis and scrotum, and peal back her foreskin. Generally, this was done using those terms. However, Bella refused to lift her penis until staff utilized her preferred slang term: junk. By forcing those with coercive power over her to adopt her terminology, Bella experienced a moment of power and exacted on her perceived opponents a modicum of the shame she felt on a daily basis.

perceived would not change her fundamentally. Whether it was offering a hand to someone who was struggling to walk or copy paper to one lacking, Bella found the decency and civility of the act to be a prophetic statement against those that denied her both. As Swinton observes, small gestures and acts can be powerful witnesses that what is presently experienced is not right or the way they ought to be and point to hope and humanity in an environment that serves to diminish them (Swinton, 2007). Bella found that to be true and sought opportunities to experience afresh its encouraging reality.

Figure 6

The Crucifixion of Saint Peter (detail)

Death

One of Bella's later observations came as she considered the shadowing of St. Peter's face. When one gazes at his countenance and works from top to bottom, shadow increasingly obscures him, leaving almost a skeletal presentation. For Bella, this observation reinforced the obvious, namely that St. Peter was dying (BA, personal communication, March 23, 2018).

Death is a reality for all people, though the precise circumstances and context of that death is largely unknown. For many incarcerated persons, however, the context of their death is already determined: the prison infirmary. The reality for many lifers and long-term offenders, is that their final home has been fixed. Reflecting on this, Bella remarked, "I don't know how these old-timers do it. These lifers. They're gonna die here. Right fucking here. In this goddamned place. I can't even think about that shit. I can't even think about dying, when I've gotta be living" (BA, personal communication, March 23, 2018).

Bella demonstrates in this observation an inability to consider death objectively. Rather, for her, death could only be understood subjectively; she does not speak of death as an abstract concept, but only of her own death. Thus, when she perceived in St. Peter's face the reality of his death, she was forced to appropriate subjectively the reality of her own mortality. This, in turn, led to existential questions that religious communities are especially suited to answer (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 69). Upon closer reflection, however, it became evident that her work did not need to center on her death, but on her living, breathing body.

The traditional Christian story is one of resurrection – bodily resurrection – over and against other views, which would posit the eternality of a spiritual substance (Wright, 2008). For Bella, this view held no great hope, but rather a promise of torment, grounded in the insecurity that she experienced within her own physical body (Rambo, 2017). Bella had felt disassociated from her body, at war with her own flesh, largely because her self-understanding did not

correlate with the sex she was assigned at birth.[13] This resonated with much Christian teaching she had heard, breeding a strong sense of self-loathing (Brock and Parker, 2001). It was only after her understanding of gender broadened that she was able to begin the arduous work of growing safe within her body. In many ways this work was prodded by an acceptance of her bodily existence as her only existence, and not merely as a prelude to some grander or greater state (Hoffman, 201). She reflected, "I grew up Christian, being told that this world would suck, but that was ok because something better was coming. I couldn't stomach that bullshit, because I and every-fucking-one else knew that was just the oppressor stepping on our throats. Fuck that. This is my life, it's what I fucking have, so I better own my shit" (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). Bella chose to do the work she had to do to experience her body, to dwell safely within it, and to accept the reality of death not as a gateway to real life. As such, it was the foundation work that she needed to do in order to find the strength to resist, the practices of which moved her further along her journey towards wholeness.[14]

Rape

In addition to her focus on St. Peter's face, Bella would frequently circle back to the conversation between Christ and Peter. The phrase which seemed to haunt her, and which she saw written across St. Peters face, were placed by the Johannine community on Jesus' lips: "carry you where you do not please." This was the place where St. Peter did not want to go. This was the place of confirmation that Christ's prophesy was correct. This was the place where, in Bella's mind, a power greater than St. Peter had forced him to accept what he did not want. She

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[13] More precisely, her self-understanding did not match the sociolinguistically-shaped understanding of masculinity present in contemporary American culture.

[14] This position stands in contrast not only to a traditional Christian understanding of resurrection, but also to a typical Christian argument against atheism, captured succinctly by Peter Kreeft (2011) when he writes, "Atheism robs death of meaning. And if death has no meaning, how can life ultimately have meaning? For death is the end of life" (p. 32).

expressed her thoughts this way: "The thing that really pisses me off about the criminal justice system is that they force you to eat a shit sandwich then say thank you. You have to stand in front of this fucking judge and pray for mercy, to kneel down and beg like a fucking whore asking daddy for more. I couldn't do it. I couldn't kneel down and take his dick in my mouth, so I stood up" (BA, personal communication, June 22, 2018).

Criminal justice systems from time immemorial have demanded the implicit or explicit consent of the punished (Foucault, 1975). Society, in a self-justifying and self-expunging way, demands that even those who are subject to the most vicious punishment accept that the actions taken against them are just and right. Incarcerated persons within the United States feel that weight today. Stripped of dignity, as Bella described, and forced before a patriarchal authority, they are taken where they do not wish to go. Often, this is accompanied by a collapse of any sense of a grander narrative at work. All spiritual work done within an incarcerated setting is done in the aftermath of that collapse. Some choose to adopt new and adjusted narratives, grappling like the Jewish community of the Hebrew Bible, with the reality of their trauma (Boase, 2016, pp. 62-64). Others reject the politics of empire and oppression and embrace a new and different understanding of reality, a non-totalizing, particular view that understands the human condition primarily as an act of imaginative resistance (Brueggemann, 2018).

Bella chose to resist by finding her voice, telling her story, an act central to trauma healing and restorative justice. For her, healing and justice worked hand in hand (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). She embodied, though with a conscious rejection of the theological veneer, practices of redemption, practices that made real within her context the possibility of life, despite suffering. Her choices, both with respect to her own healing and to call forth growth in others were an embodiment of kindness, resonances of grace (Swinton, 2007).

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Without a sense that she was working to set things right and making a positive contribution, she could not find peace and wholeness within herself (Herman, 2015). To live was to pursue justice, and it was that fight that allowed her to forge meaning from her story of trauma and pain (Frankl, 2006). Though she would find scruples with the theological language, she experienced what Kreeft describes as the destiny of all people, not a resignation to evil, but an active fight against it (Kreeft, 2011). She had indeed gone to a place she did not want to go, namely prison, not because of some omnipotent being's arbitrary and capricious will, but as a journey to a place where she could love herself, even if that Self was wounded. The wounds, in fact, were the space from which she spoke (Rambo, 2017).

Alone

Bella's final observation of St. Peter is that he is alone (BA, personal communication, February 9, 2018). In a literal sense, this is not true. Caravaggio's painting includes three other figures, with at least one in physical contact with St. Peter's body. However, as Bella processed her own emotions, she projected an overwhelming sense of loneliness, which she saw in St. Peter. Bella explains, "Prison is a damn lonely place, Chaplain, especially when you're like me. I know what Peter felt like…you're the only one in whole damn world" (BA, personal communication, February 9, 2018). Frequently, newly incarcerated individuals seek out those who share their external attributes, political or religious convictions, hometowns, or organizational affiliation. For Bella, none of those categories were applicable as a means of connection, and she perceived most of her fellow inmates as threats. Driven into isolation but finding a means of regulating to the point of movement, she felt an overwhelming urge to act, to speak, or to fight (Dana, 2018).[15] In her case, she chose to lash out at those she felt confident

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[15] Using the terminology of Polyvagal theory, Bella found herself dwelling within the dorsal vagal complex. However, she was able to resist disassociation and regulate to the point that she shifted within her body from the

would not in turn endanger her: those over whom she had emotional control, those who were physically intimidated, or those on whom she could count for self-restraint.

As the survivor of significant trauma, Bella's personality was comprised of parts, many of whom served to protect her, but were trapped with the skills she had developed at the time of trauma (Schwartz, 1999). A significant part of her personal growth involved making peace with those parts, learning to accept them within their context, and growing in her ability to regulate emotionally when she found herself acting within that part. When she spat out the blasphemous statements at me, it was not her Self, but her protector part working very hard to keep her safe as best as she could, an insight that was helpful and healing for her (BA, personal communication, May 18, 2018). As Bella grew and developed a greater internal equilibrium, she began to notice within herself her need for relationship and the pain that her isolation caused. Recognizing that isolation and loneliness in Peter allowed her to give words to the disconnection she felt. When she spoke that reality into existence, it opened the door to healing, connection, and restoration.

Bella found joy, but not joy in a stereotypical sense. For her, joy was a matter of resonance, when something within her seemed to connect with something within the world in a way that matched, either in unison or harmony.[16] This was most powerfully experienced interpersonally; the feelings that emerged when bonds truly and authentically formed were joyous, yet sober (Matthewes, 2015). For Bella, interpersonal resonance was felt most keenly when she felt allied, when deep within her body and mind she felt convinced that the other was "for her" and willing to join with her in her mission of resistance (BA, personal communication,

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dorsal vagal to the sympathetic nervous system. In Dana's terms, she moved up the ladder, into a state that caused a surge of energy to move throughout her nervous system. Often termed the "fight or flight response," polyvagal theory has demonstrated a whole host of activities beyond that simple dialectic are in play, as they were for Bella.
[16] Though Bella herself would not agree to such terms, one might argue that the resonance she experienced was a result of an increased sensitivity to or experience of the attunement between the Holy within the world and the Holy within her.

June 15, 2018). Bella and her allies were experiencing suffering, but it was a suffering together that built solidarity when viewed not simply as a shared context, but as a shared motivation for growth and resistance (Kreeft, 2011, p. 72).

Conclusion

Ultimately, Bella's spiritual journey centered on two significant areas of growth: her willingness and capacity to experience and love herself and her drive to resist the oppressive forces at work in her life. Growth in both of those arenas was only possible within a relational context, a relationship defined by honesty, commitment, and authenticity. That authenticity welcomed a creative and healing third into our conversations (Buber, 1988), a sense of connection that even a committed anti-supernaturalist like Bella deemed extraordinary and extraordinarily other (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). That third defied definition and categorization, but its reality was undeniable. Bella came to crave the experience of connection, which she labeled as spiritual, but not supernatural. "Just being present and real with people, that's my religion…knowing that I'm not alone, that I'm going to make it…that's my faith and it's my hope," Bella would tell me (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). Bella would eventually come to see her incarcerated state, not as a good, but as an arena in which good could be found and forged. The darkness in which she lived provided the space for "an ongoing spiritual process in which" she was "empowered to live and love more freely," though love expressed as resistance to that which forecloses love, namely hatred (May, 2005, p. 95).[17]

The theme of resistance can be traced throughout Bella's journey and can be helpfully conceptualized according to Judith Herman's three stages of trauma recovery. Seen through this

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[17] The concept of love for others is not one that Bella embraces substantially, and she certainly does not see in "loving her neighbor" a central, unifying, or foundational practice. While contrary to much of Christian teaching, it can be argued that Bella's resistance was in fact love in action on behalf of her neighbor and herself.

lens, resistance can be understood as a helpful set of attitudes and practices, as a posture, that can help facilitate movement through those stages in a way that functions effectively within the incarcerated environment. Resistance is also a mindset, a way of perceiving that empowers those who make the choice to resist.

The first of Herman's stages can be termed safety and stabilization (Herman, 2015). In this stage safe, healing relationships are established and trust begins to be rediscovered. The survivor of trauma moves on from a frozen state, trapped within a dorsal vagal state (Dana, 2018). As Bella's story demonstrates, the mere choice to resist, whether newly discerned or recollected, can help to promote motion emotionally and physically. As an internal choice, it can be enacted within even the most restricted of environments, including a prison cell. Furthermore, the tendency in some incarcerated persons to push back against authority or resist coercion, forces that are powerfully at work within a prison, provide a natural avenue for resistance, provided that resistance remains within appropriate boundaries.

Resistance can certainly take unhelpful forms, and incarcerated persons have shown a remarkable ingenuity in developing ways of resisting and protesting throughout the ages. Does such resistance, shaped as disobedience or outright hostility, have a place in trauma recovery? Certainly, the impetus is there, but even someone as committed to protest as Bella reports that such acts actually undercut recovery, because of the external and internal results of such action (BA, personal communication, June 15, 2018). Externally, such acts result in punishment, often including extended isolation. Internally, the cost is higher, often resulting in feelings of shame, guilt, and self-accusation that work against progress in recovery. For Bella, the aftermath of such actions often included trauma responses, returning her to the physiological state of her past trauma. This is an important boundary for those engaging in resistance, focusing less on

externally established boundaries while maintaining careful awareness of one's body, being, and thinking.

Herman's second stage can be labeled remembrance and mourning (Herman, 2018). This significant stage centers on the telling of the story of trauma, in a group or individual setting, that, through the telling, moves from a shame-filled story of humiliation to a story of empowerment, dignity, and virtue (Herman, 2018). This telling needs language, which can often be difficult to access. The practice of lament, providing a language of protest, rage, and resistance, can help supply a vocabulary sufficient to the task of initial and progressive retelling. It is a particular form of the emergent theopoetics. Further, as Swinton observes, lament is a formative task, separating the redemptive practice from the cries of pain so frequently uttered in prison (Swinton, 2007). Such language moves the lamenter out of silence and helps to establish a means of connection between the survivor and helping professionals, a connection that promotes healing.

The survivor reconnects with others in healthy, life-giving ways during the final stage. This is directly interpersonal and global, as she begins to engage with greater society and the world. This movement results in commonality, at which point a survivor is able to tell her story with a sense of personal ownership, rather than feeling controlled by the story, but able to place it in appropriate context. This is not once and done, but a lifelong process (Herman, 2018). For Bella, resistance assisted with this process in a number of ways. By aligning herself against injustice that was both visible and communal, she was able to recruit allies who might not otherwise have embraced her. Furthermore, her small acts of kindness, which she counted as acts of resistance, strengthened bonds with those in her immediate social context.

John Swinton, a significant influence in this chapter, writes from an explicitly Christian context, even claiming that nothing is more important than loving God (Swinton, 2007). There is some deep irony, then, in demonstrating how his work rhymes so well with the work of a committed atheist such as Bella. However, it is precisely that flexibility that allows the practices of resistance to grow in effectiveness within an incarcerated context. The tasks of recovering from trauma, and of coping with continual oppression, is not simply a task for those with Christian faith, but for all incarcerated persons. One need not embrace the claims, patterns, or even community of Christianity in order to embrace resistance, as Bella did, and find purpose, hope, and healing there.

Chapter VI: Case Study #4: Aesthetic Exercises

When surveying the literature on restorative justice, art therapy in incarcerated settings, or incarcerated-based therapy generally, it becomes apparent that the focus of both research and funding is on youth offenders. There are a number of valid and intuitive reasons for this. Young offenders may well form the group most likely to respond to therapeutic interventions. Society certainly stands to gain more from effective youth intervention that intervention with any other class within an incarcerated community. After all, lifers and long-term offenders will likely never walk the streets again. A utilitarian methodology would direct resources towards young offenders, who are more likely to reintegrate into larger society and for a longer period of time. Society at large, and thus governmental funding, reflects this thinking and shows a greater concern for youth. Society, it must also be admitted, seeks to protect itself from the dangers of those released from the juvenile justice system. There is simply no grand moral imperative within current American society to provide programming for those who have been locked away with a key that has been thrown away.

The focus of research, funding, and effort on younger offenders reveals within society, and within many in the criminal justice system, a bias toward a retributive notion of justice (Zehr, 2005). While restorative and therapeutic efforts can be directed towards younger offenders, it is less with a concern for its own welfare and more with a concern for the broader community. In essence, society has demonstrated a concern for their self-interest, their safety, and their economic interests by investing in programs that they believe will reduce the costs of recidivism and certain behaviors within the community. Economic decisions are made and actions undertaken with a veneer of therapeutic or restorative concern. A truly restorative concern would embrace incarcerated persons of all sentence-lengths, and the priority of funding

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based on different metrics than those currently employed, perhaps with an aim at greatest reconciliatory capacity and community impact.

The purely utilitarian, and self-interested, approach to criminal justice demonstrates a view from the outside and above: a lack of human connection with those incarcerated and perhaps a desire to control or exert power for political purposes (Alexander, 2012). One of the realizations that landed significantly for me early in my career in corrections was the fact that there were men and women who had been incarcerated prior to the start of my work and who would remain incarcerated following my retirement. In 2016, 10.8% of the prison population in the Pennsylvania Department of corrections were serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole, a figure that does not include those who were given sentences, the minimum of which would extend well beyond their natural life expectancy (The Sentencing Project, 2019). These individuals, lifers, could look around, see the concrete and steel, the razor wire and fencing, the grim neighbors and authoritative staff, and know that the rest of their lives would be spent in that environment. They knew, when they entered the gates of the correctional facility that this was the place they would die.

As that realization grew, it instilled in me a desire to provide some means of support and encouragement beyond that which was already offered.[1] The tangible expression of that desire was an initial group of eight individuals, all of whom had been sentenced to life without parole. Throughout this chapter we will meet some of these individuals, hear their stories, and reflect on their interactions and growth. One element of that group dynamic will receive particular attention, the use of music as a means of developing and practicing the skills of empathy, imagination, and creativity. We will see that such development and practice was a benefit not

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[1] Every facility in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections offers special programming and organizations for lifers and long-term offenders.

only to the individuals and their interactions within the group, but also to the prison community as a whole.

Lifers Supporting Lifers

The "Lifers Supporting Lifers" group (LSL) consisted of eight cisgender males, all of whom were sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, each having been convicted of at least one homicide or murder. They ranged in age from 28 to 64, and each had been incarcerated for at least six years. Five of the eight participants were from the Greater Philadelphia area, one was from the Pittsburgh area, and two were from rural parts of Central Pennsylvania. Two of the participants were Caucasian, one was Latinx, and five were African-American. They represented the significant diversity that is so often found within prison.

Each individual volunteered to participate in the group, knowing that it was the first of its kind in that particular prison. The group was nonsectarian, though within the initial ground rules established by the group, the importance of valuing and respecting the beliefs, religious or otherwise, of each participant was emphasized. The group's goals and guidelines were developed in the first two meetings; the first was largely a brainstorming session, while each was given a chance to reflect and offer their additional thoughts in the second. The rules were typical to such a group: respect, confidentiality, and orderly participation were emphasized. The primary goal of the group, as expressed by the participants, was to encourage one another along their incarcerated journey. This would be achieved by learning, sharing, personal growth, and interpersonal growth, with the latter two goals largely undefined. The group committed to weekly meetings for a period of three months, at which time they would determine if they would extend their commitment.

Empathy

One of the most common challenges in any group dynamic is harnessing effectively the powerful personalities and doing so in such a way that neither silences the introverted nor shuts down the powerful voice altogether (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). It should come as no surprise for an initial group that the LSL group contained numerous powerful, extroverted individuals. At the head of that pack was Bill. Bill was a 54-year-old man, born and raised in Philadelphia. Having served four years of a burglary sentence he had been paroled, but within a year had been convicted of double homicide and sentenced to life without parole. Bill was loud, even raucous, and highly opinionated, whether it was about criminal justice issues or the Philadelphia Eagles. Bill presented a challenge to the group dynamic, often working to dominate the conversation and resisting redirection.[2]

Bill's outgoing and powerful demeanor was on display for the entire group, so when he began to take growth steps, that development was evident for all in the LSL group. That growth began in the aftermath of a confrontation. After establishing appropriate guidelines and boundaries and discussing shared goals, the next few weeks were spent discussing coping strategies, with an emphasis on acute moments of depression, despair, and hopelessness, common realities for each participant. One of the first strategies discussed was the use of music. During that conversation, the group discussed the impact of style and genre, with a majority opining that upbeat music was generally more effective in lifting their spirits than melancholy tunes. In that context, Bill made a disparaging remark about Country music, offering that the frequent storylines of loss and sorrow were not helpful. Another participant vigorously disagreed, and in the ensuing exchange racially-tinged musical commentary was offered. After

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[2] Power is in short supply within an incarcerated environment, and often incarcerated individuals will seek power for themselves in any way they can, even if it is controlling a conversation or group.

redirecting the conversation towards more constructive thinking, the group suggested that value could be found in all genres of music, if the listener was willing and open.

The group then decided to test that theory the following week, with individuals tasked with bringing examples of various genres to play for the group. That following week the group was energized and eager to share the variety of musical selections they had chosen. The genres were indeed diverse, with country, hip-hop, R&B, contemporary Christian, jazz, blues, dance, and heavy metal songs on the playlist. The group once again collaborated to develop a list of guidelines. Each song would be played for the group, after which comments and reflection could be offered. Each listener was encouraged to listen openly, with an expectation that they would enjoy the song, and to refrain from criticism. Listeners were not required to like the song, to enjoy the style, or to appreciate the message or story, but each was encouraged to listen to the song on its terms.

The results of the initial endeavor were instructive and enjoyable. Each participant stated either during the process or following it, that their exposure to different genres opened their minds to appreciate different musical forms. While none reported a significant shift in their preference, a greater level of openness was beginning to develop. The group enjoyed the exercise so much that they decided to include it as a regular part of their meetings, often beginning by listening to a song that was selected by one of them. This song was frequently presented because it had a positive impact on the presenter in the intervening week. It was after listening to one of those songs, Hank Williams Jr.'s "A Country Boy Can Survive," several weeks later that Bill expressed his appreciation and growth. Theretofore, Bill had considered Country music by white people and for white people, and often conveying significant racist undertones. This had simply been an assumption, not grounded in experience of the genre. Bill stated to the group that once

he opened himself to listen and listened with the hope of liking both the song and the singer, that he grew to appreciate and then to enjoy much of Country music. For him, it was a breakthrough.

What Bill expressed in that moment was a significant aesthetic principle, that of empathy. True participation in art, regardless of the medium, involves empathy on the part of the participant, preferably towards the art itself as well as the artist (Smith, 2011). An attitude of rejection or hard-heartedness will inherently limit the individual's capacity to participate in a piece of art, appreciate its aesthetic value, and receive its message. Empathy, on the other hand, helps to form a relational and perceptual stance in which art can be valued, appreciated, experienced, and received in its fullest sense (Gernot et al, 2017). The LSL Group encouraged this with their guidelines and the fruit of that empathy was evident to each participant. This encouraged them to practice empathy, developing their capacity to listen with compassionate responsiveness.

The group recognized the value of empathy not simply in art participation, but in interpersonal interaction as well. The opportunities to practice such empathy interpersonally, however, were quite limited, especially outside of the group. Thus, members expressed significant appreciation for the opportunities to develop their capacity for empathy that listening to music with the group afforded. The participants also noticed the effect of that expanded capacity within the group. They listened with greater empathy not only to the music, but to each other, and that greater empathy was yielding positive results (Davis, 2018). One individual commented that he could see and hear *more* of the others in the group, while another observed that he could see and hear others *more clearly*. The bonds between group members were strengthening, and empathy was, in their view, one of the significant factors.

Peacebuilding is grounded in the capacity of individuals to see one another. As Paul Lederach (2005) observes, it is when two parties begin to see each other that peace can begin to be built (p. 175). Empathy deepens that perception, allowing individuals to be seen and heard more clearly. Empathy, then, is the environment in which peacebuilding most effectively flourishes. Asking parties already engaged in conflict to develop their capacity for empathy, or to introduce it at all, is a tall order, certainly with respect to one another. However, to encourage them through a practice similar to that developed by the LSL Group may help to lay the groundwork for more effective peacebuilding. As noted above, the group members noticed that improved capacity within themselves, observing improved relationships and a greater sense of connection and peace.

Imagination

Of the eight songs originally selected by participants in the LSL Group, two of them were instrumental. Adrian selected "Opus" by Eric Prydz, a song that he described as dance or techno music while Cliff chose Charlie Parker's "Someday We'll All Be Free," a jazz composition. This sparked an interesting discussion within the group and prompted the most varied response. Those songs with lyrics surfaced, in general, similar thoughts and images in the listeners, but the instrumental music prompted significantly different imagery. This was especially true weeks later when Adrian selected another instrumental piece for the group to listen to. Responses to that song were significantly varied, from images of machinery and heartbeats to pictures of lions and rollercoasters. All reactions were energetic, with some more vivid than others, but the world that each listener created in response to the music was quite different. In addition to this variety, listeners in the group described their experience as more strenuous than when listening to music that included lyrics. It took more energy for them to focus, listen, and attend to what they were

hearing. One participant commented that lyrics did the heavy lifting for him, work that he had to do when listening to instrumental music.

This response rhymes well with Immanuel Kant's (1872) understanding of aesthetic imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) as expounded in his *Third Critique, Kritik der Urtheilskraft.* Unencumbered by categories (*categorie*) or definite concepts (*bestimmter Begriff*), the cognitive powers (*Erkenntniskräfte*) are in free play (*freien Spiele*), constructing in response to the artistic stimuli (Kant, 1872, pp. 58-59). The heavy lifting that the participant described could be characterized as that act of imagination. All music, but especially instrumental music, requires an act of imagination on the part of the listener, converting aural stimuli into images, emotions, concepts, and even stories. To enter into the world of the music, to be immersed within it, and to engage in that world is functionally an act of imagination. When lyrics provide descriptions it is less strenuous on one's imagination. Narratives carry the listener along, but when words are absent, it is up to the participant to forge those images and stories themselves, as invited by the sounds they hear. A particular listener may be more or less aware of this process, but as the temporal lobe is triggered and regions of the brain respond, images, feelings, and a host of other noetic responses ensue (van der Kolk, 2014).

For Adrian, the process of imagining in response to music came naturally. "I've listened to music all my life," Adrian said during an individual session. "Music is part of my soul. If I didn't have music, I wouldn't have a soul" (AH, personal communication, November 17, 2017). Music may have always been a part of Adrian's story, but so had abuse. Sexually abused by a relative at a very young age, physical abuse was also common during his childhood. He began to self-medicate with narcotics as a preteen and by the time he was a teenager he had progressed to cocaine. It was while high on cocaine in his early twenties that Adrian sought out a dealer to

"continue the party." A disagreement arose, shots were fired, and by the end of the night Adrian was in jail, facing two counts of murder. While in the county jail, and struggling with significant withdrawal, Adrian returned to music as a refuge. "Music would consume me," Adrian recalled, "I would hear the notes, feel the beats, and I would dance along with them. I could see it in my head, the notes, the colors, the pounding bass, and I'd be there dancing. It would engage my brain, put it to use, so I didn't have to think about my charges or how much pain I was in" (AH, personal communication, November 17, 2017). Adrian would progress from there, often allowing the music to overtake him and creating worlds around him in which he could dance and feel free.

Adrian shared those experiences of participating in music with the LSL Group and they were received with many nodding heads. Each of the members could share an experience in which music moved their brains from a place of lethargy to a place of action, moving them from the dull gray of their present existence to a colorful world of their own creation. These acts of imagination were fueled by the music, by the dopamine produced in response to the songs they heard (Ferreri et al, 2018). That imagination, however, was not only useful when listening to music, but also was applicable in a plethora of other domains.

Navigating the incarcerated environment requires a host of skills, but none of them is as critical as imagination. Whether it is cooking with the meager supplies available from the commissary, building a fly swatter from available materials, or finding a solution to a conflict on the block, ingenuity is a helpful characteristic and skill. As such, incarcerated persons will often display an ability to think outside of the box, or unconstrained by existing noetic structures, that far surpasses those on the outside. The LSL Group demonstrated an incredible level of imagination, overcoming practical, tangible challenges and broader, more abstract obstacles.

This was on display when the group as a whole turned its power of imagination on a problem besetting not just the prison, but the country as a whole.

Adrian broached the subject carefully. As a Latinx man, he had watched the news, hearing the political narratives that were spun following the United State presidential election of 2016. Concerned with what he felt was a deepening divide between persons of color and whites, he wanted to discuss an observation he had made about the group and the chapel community in which it operated. "Why is it," Adrian asked, "that people can't seem to get along out there, but we get along fine in here? We are white, black, and brown. We believe in all sorts of different things, and we are homies. Why can't those people do that?" The answer, the group agreed was a result of their imagination. Thrown together against their will, the members of the group and the chapel community chose to connect with one another. Sharing space and resources, it was impossible for any particular individual or religious group to think in purely individualistic terms. They were united, and that proximity bred a sense of curiosity, a desire to learn more about each other: their faith, their stories, their rituals, and their hopes. Conflict arose, inevitably, but the members of the chapel community shared a commitment to working through that conflict in nonviolent ways, ways that would spare the chapel and the broader community significant negative consequences. There was also a shared willingness to push into the future together, regardless of how mysterious and unknown that future might be.

Remarkably, what the LSL Group described as the capacity to get along within the chapel community parallels significantly what John Paul Lederach (2005) terms moral imagination:

> Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web
> of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity
> that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in

and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the

mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence. (p. 5)

The LSL Group had discovered in their meetings yet another opportunity to exercise a capacity

that had direct application in peacebuilding: developing their imagination. Lederach's

fundamental premise is that overcoming violence and building communities of peace requires

innovation and sustained imagination. That vision obtained within the chapel community, a place

where people of diverse belief, practice, and background could gather together constructively

and forge healing relationships. Employing imaginative thinking, the members of that

community were able to pull together solutions, structures, and systems that carved a place of

safety and peace within the prison environment.

Creativity

"Good music makes you move. Great music makes you sing along" (JW, personal

communication, October 13, 2017). This was a common saying from James, the member of the

LSL Group who had been incarcerated for the shortest period of time, six years. James had never

held an instrument before coming to prison, but during the six years of his incarceration he had

taught himself to play the guitar, the keyboard, and the drums. "It wasn't that I didn't want to

learn to play. I always did," James said, "but I never had the time. Now, well, I have all the time

in the world" (JW, personal communication, January 12, 2018). Playing music filled James with

a sense of joy, with a feeling of accomplishment, and with a belief in his own creative capacity.

Singing, for James, was a creative act *ex nihilo*; into an empty space came something, a song or a

lyric, that had not existed in that particular way before.

When James presented the idea that singing was a creative act to the group, it was met

with agreement. Music, it seemed, was one of few ways they could express themselves and bring

something into the world that would not subject them to scrutiny or put them at risk for trouble. The incarcerated environment is a uniform space: incarcerated persons are given essentially identical sets of clothing to wear, a choice of shoes that are similar in design, and limitations on what accessories can be worn.[3] Individual expression is not encouraged and it is certainly not free. Making music, however, is something that can and does take place, within certain parameters.[4] That creative act, whether a well-known song or an original composition, feeds a sense of accomplishment and power, a belief that something new can come to be.

James took a courageous step. Having established a pattern of listening to music and reflecting on it during group meetings, he asked permission of the group to sing a song that he had composed. After receiving encouragement both in terms of permission and an assurance of emotional safety, the group decided to give him two weeks to decide and rehearse. Of course, James knew what song he would sing, and two weeks later he was ready to perform. Gently strumming his guitar, James shared with the group a song of lament and hope, telling his story in a way that resonated deeply with each in the group. The response was overwhelming and affirmative and altered the trajectory of the group. Having broken the ice, other members of the group volunteered to present their own compositions: including songs, raps, and poems. While this did not become a weekly occurrence and not every member chose to participate, it became a regular part of LSL.

LSL Group meetings became places of creativity, a space where members could explore their own creative potential. They were encouraged to compose and encouraged in response to their composition. One individual who claimed to have never written a poem in his life,

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[3] From a visual point of view, hairstyle is the primary means of self-expression.
[4] Those parameters are set by the institution, in terms of quiet hours, and by neighbors.

presented a composition to literal applause. In so doing, the LSL Group was exercising a vital need within peacebuilding: creativity.

Imagination and creativity are similar and related concepts, which have been distinguished in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this work, imagination and creativity can be differentiated in a way analogous to two significant terms from the Hebrew Bible. Imagination, both moral and aesthetic, is analogous to the Hebrew term עָשָׂה, to form. It assumes a preexistent material which is then shaped or formed into something new, something it previously was not. This could be physical materials or it could be a relational matrix, but the fundamental act is to rearrange in a new way. Here is seen the empiric element of Kant's aesthetic, the necessary existence of some stimulating data on which Einbildungskraft can work. Likewise, the moral imagination of Lederach assumes an existing social and relational structure that can be analyzed, known, and then reformed. Seen in these terms, when the LSL Group exercised their Einbildungskraft, they were concurrently exercising their moral imagination, a connection Kant himself would likely embrace (Kant, 1872).

Creativity, on the other hand, parallels the Hebrew concept of בָּרָא. Creativity brings into being something that had not previously existed and from materials that did not exist or were not apparent. As Jean-Paul Sartre (1940) argues in *The Psychology of Imagination*, the artist does not create a mere reflection or expression of some existing thought or mental image (p. 275). Rather, what is real is what is created, brought forth from nothingness. While imagination looks at what is and envisions what might be, creativity conceives of something entirely new, even when inspired by what has or is. Both are critical in peacebuilding. As the LSL Group drew near to its end, it conceived of something that needed more than imagination, it needed creativity.

One of the unstated goals of the LSL Group that became more and more apparent over time was its desire to be a group of influence. The members each in their own way wanted to have an impact on their incarcerated community. Of particular concern to them was the group in the prison they labeled young bucks, young individuals who were new to the state system and who, for the most part, would spend less than ten years incarcerated. The participants in the LSL Group felt they had something to share, something to offer those individuals that might influence them to become productive and valuable members of the community once they left prison. They wanted to do all they could to keep them from coming back.

As the group brainstormed how to accomplish that, they continued to circle back to the belief that the prison community had to change. For generations prisons had been known as colleges for criminals, a place where people came and grew worse. As Foucault observed, prisons operated according to scheme such that they cannot fail to create delinquents (*delinquants*; p. 270). The members of the LSL Group believed it was within the power of those within the community to change that, to create a community that was not violent but rather enfleshed values that might aid in rehabilitation. To even envision such a reality, let alone to bring it about, would take significant creativity. A nonviolent prison simply had not existed let alone been experienced by any of the group's members. This was the concluding task of the original LSL group, a task that was not punctiliar, but enduring: to cast a creative vision of a prison community in which might did not make right, coercion was not the primary means of attaining ends, and in which violence was simply not an option to be employed.

Aesthetic, Moral, and Prophetic Imagination

My work with the LSL Group points to a possibility that most on the outside choose not to observe: that lifers and long-term offenders, through their own growth and the application of

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that growth, can have a positive impact on the broader community outside of the prison. If the broader vision of the LSL Group were to be achieved, then the effects of their work would potentially mirror the current focus, on younger offenders with shorter prison sentences.

What is needed is imagination: the aesthetic imagination of Kant, the moral imagination of John Paul Lederach, and the *Prophetic Imagination* of Walter Brueggemann (2018). Within the totalizing system of empire, which exclusively embraces retributive notions of justice, work with lifers and long-term offenders does not make sense. They should be disenfranchised. They should be numbed. They should be silenced (Brueggemann, 2018). This is efficiently and effectively executed within today's system of mass incarceration: men and women are stripped of rights, medicated, and may are warehoused until they die (Alexander, 2012). This view, heightened by political rhetoric and appeals to fear, can never get beyond the seeming facility of violence (Bader-Saye, 2007). It is precisely at this intersection that the capacity of prophetic imagination to "nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture" becomes most necessary and most transformational (Brueggemann, 2018, p. 13). This mental image, given a new language or theopoetics, which makes space for restorative justice, is a necessary precondition for change (Caputo, 2006).

Brueggemann persuasively argues for the necessity of prophetic imagination to bring about such a radical break with present socio-political realities. The politics of exploitation and oppression are clearly seen inside prisons and the criminal justice system, conveniently covered by a triumphalist message in which lifers are hidden and effectively removed from societal consciousness. These men and women are victims of the royal consciousness par excellence. Such shackles can only be broken by the power of the Holy, moving through muscles exercised

in ways discussed above, fueled by the explosive power of hope (Brueggemann, 2018). It is the artist, and their poetic imagination, who can reach beyond the numb exteriors of incarcerated persons, plumb the depths of their experience, and rekindle within them the passion and emotion needed not only to thrive individually, but to make a difference for their fellow persons. Thus motivated and encouraged, imagination, creativity, and empathy can be developed, strengthened, and employed in ways that build up not only the well-being of the individual, but of his or her community and broader society as well. Whether it is expressing lament or amazement, incarcerated people can bond, form community, and develop the necessary skills for radical change through the power of aesthetic experience (Brueggemann, 2018).

Chapter VII: The "Why" of the Therapeutic Practice

In the preceding case studies, participation in works of art play a central role in the healing process of incarcerated persons who experienced, and were experiencing, a variety of traumas. Whether that art was in the form of music, dance, poetry, or painting, within the context of a pastoral conversation, religious ritual or practice, or a support group, it was active participation in art that opened avenues to growth and healing. That participation was assisted by a chaplain and by peers, within a formalized counseling context and as an organic outgrowth of relationship and a mutual desire to grow. What these case studies do not demonstrate, however, is *why* that art participation was therapeutically beneficial. In seeking the answer to that question, the aesthetic framework presented at the outset becomes useful. As will hopefully be seen, each of the three elements of the aesthetical system, the therapeutic social practice, the artist's language game, and the emergent theopoetics, can help to clarify what was happening in those moments. In this present chapter, we will consider that explanatory efficacy, and in the following chapter, we will explore how that understanding can inform pastoral care in a practical way.

Before engaging in that examination, however, one term is in need of definition. The therapeutic social practice was defined as a practice aimed at achieving healing from trauma, but heretofore healing has remained a nebulous concept. This was somewhat intentional; healing by its very nature is a broad concept, and the steps that lead to healing are necessarily unique. However, at this stage, gaining a clearer understanding of what healing entails and encompasses is necessary, as it will allow for a more formal assessment. It is important to recognize, however, the indexical and fluid nature of the concept. That said, the overarching framework for understanding healing will be an analogical adaptation of Shelly Rambo's constructive understanding of resurrection.

Healing Conceptualized

I met Marcus on one of my first day as a prison chaplain. Convicted of double homicide, he was sentenced to forty to eighty years in a state penitentiary. He had served seven of those years when I met him that first day, and our ensuing conversations would open my mind to many of the realities of prison, prison life, and prison ministry. Marcus was roughly my age, healthy, and had a reasonable expectation, and certainly a hope, that he would live to see his minimum sentence. "My hope, chaplain, is to live long enough to die on the outside," he would tell me (personal communication, MS, November 15, 2016). While the weight of that statement certainly laid heavily on me, his following statement reframed my understanding of my role as a prison chaplain: "Chaplain, you're gonna be long gone before I ever see that parole board" (personal communication, MS, November 15, 2016).

At first, I interpreted Marcus' comment as a statement on my professional endurance or personal longevity; it was not uncommon for individuals to be hired by the Department of Corrections and quickly discover that the work was not for them. Indeed, my predecessor had only served a few months, and my initial insecurity led me to believe that Marcus had noticed something about me that I had not noticed about myself. Marcus quickly clarified, however, that he did not intend that at all. Rather, he was observing the simple fact that his first parole hearing was thirty-three years away. Thirty-three years. "You're not working 'til you're seventy, chaplain, and that's a fact" (personal communication, MS, November 15, 2016). Marcus was in prison before I began my career in corrections and, in all likelihood, would be incarcerated at my retirement. He was not alone. At that time, more than five thousand individuals were serving a life sentence in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania prison system.

I started prison ministry with a vision, a vision of healing and restoration, of providing a place within the prison in which incarcerated persons could come for healing, begin or continue their spiritual journey, reintegrate into society, and flourish there. That vision remains; a vast majority of persons incarcerated will, at minimum, have the opportunity to parole or complete their sentence.[1] My experience with Marcus, however, helped to broaden my vision to include those who will spend the balance of their lives behind prison walls. For them, the vision is not to begin the process of healing from within a safe space and continue it on the outside, but rather to find healing, and even flourishing, within the traumatizing environment of prison.

This reality shapes my understanding of healing, and of flourishing. Healing from trauma is not a static state, achieved and enjoyed forevermore, but is more helpfully understood as a stage of living, a state of being and becoming that is characterized by a few significant elements (Herman, 2015). Borrowing a phrase from an interview with Bessel van der Kolk (2014), healing has happened, or is happening, when individuals "befriend themselves" (Bullard, 2014). Lifers and long-term offenders face the reality that the rest of their lives will be spent in an environment that actively causes and reinforces trauma; a Garden of Eden can never be found and Paradise will not be restored, externally. Their human interactions and relationships will always be tinged by harmful elements of power and manipulation. Such a conception is reminiscent of Christ's words to the penitent thief on the cross, "truthfully I say to you, 'today you will be with me in paradise'" (Luke 23:43, author's translation). Paradise was present, but so was the cross; pain and redemption coexisting in that space. Healing, whatever it might be, must be understood within that context and pliable enough to be achieved within it; the goal of therapeutic engagement with art is not a pristine state of being, but a capacity to endure and resist.

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[1] Of course, there are also those individuals who go free for other, legal reasons, such as exoneration or a vacating of their sentence.

In her text, *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*, Shelly Rambo (2017) offers a reinterpretation of the traditional Christian understanding of resurrection. Resurrection, for Rambo, is not an ephemeral existence experienced in an afterlife. Emphasizing Jesus' resurrection appearance to St. Thomas and other disciples in the narrative of the Johannine Gospel, she develops an understanding of resurrection that consists of a very physical living in the aftermath of trauma, bearing the wounds one has sustained. Unlike other Christian understandings, the emotional wounds of trauma are not covered over or erased, but, like Christ, remain open and uncovered.[2] This understanding of resurrection resonates well with the incarcerated experience, an experience that cannot deny the obvious wounds that are carried throughout incarcerated life. If resurrection demands a pristine state of utter wholeness, then it cannot happen inside prison, a physical place with resultant relational matrices and dynamics that inflict and reopen wounds continually.

Rambo's selection of the wounded Christ as the archetypical vision of resurrected living may stand at odds, or at least in tension, with other understandings within the Christian Testament or the Hebrew Bible. The predominantly Pauline term υγιαινο, for example, seems to imply that health or wellness is a matter of soundness. Is it appropriate to think of someone who bears wounds as sound? If so, in what sense? Similarly, the Hebrew concept of שָׁלוֹם, a term encompassing personal and corporate peace, harmony, justice, wellbeing, and flourishing, does not, at least on face value, seem appropriately ascribed to one who bears unhealed wounds. The healing described primarily in the Gospels, that of θεραπευο, with its etymological connections with service (θεραπον) and warming (θερο), does seem more resonant with Rambo's thesis, in

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[2] A significant element of Rambo's work in this text is to describe and uncover traumatic wounds in the political or social arena, specifically in the United States. While helpful and important, that application of the concept will not be treated here.

large part because of its sense of continuing action. While the healing itself may be complete, there is a sense of continued action, service or warming or healing, that undergirds the one healed. Why, then, privilege Rambo's understanding?

The sobering reality is that incarcerated persons may not experience *shalom* or soundness while incarcerated. Their very status demands restorative justice work, work that must be completed before a reign of *shalom* is possible. Resurrected living may be attained, but to posit utter wholeness within both a system designed to disenfranchise and dehumanize and a culture which consistently traumatizes and retraumatizes may well be impossible. Often, persons of faith will move to the eschatological, looking to a life-to-come as a place of *shalom* of υγιαινο. While the merits of such a move may be debated, for present purposes an understanding of healing that is both achievable and honest about the context is necessary.

What differentiates resurrection, in Rambo's work, from other modes of life are three elements, characteristics that I would point to as indicators of healing: a recognition of spirit work, a healthy connection to community, and a sense of peace within one's body. Again, it cannot be reiterated enough that healing is not a static state, but a dynamic place of becoming, of consistent renewal and commitment to the journey. However, one can look and, to a certain extent, measure the degree to which these elements are a lived reality. In this conception, one does not move on from trauma, or the power of trauma to influence and harm. Rather, the survivor is able to live and flourish while actively bleeding. For many ears, this may not sound like healing at all. If the wound still bleeds, how can one consider themselves healed? Rambo's view of resurrection is indeed paradigm-shifting. In many ways, it is not until one experiences

resurrected-but-wounded life in another, akin to St. Thomas the Apostle, or in one's self that her

constructive work proves most relevant and fruitful.[3]

Figure 7

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas
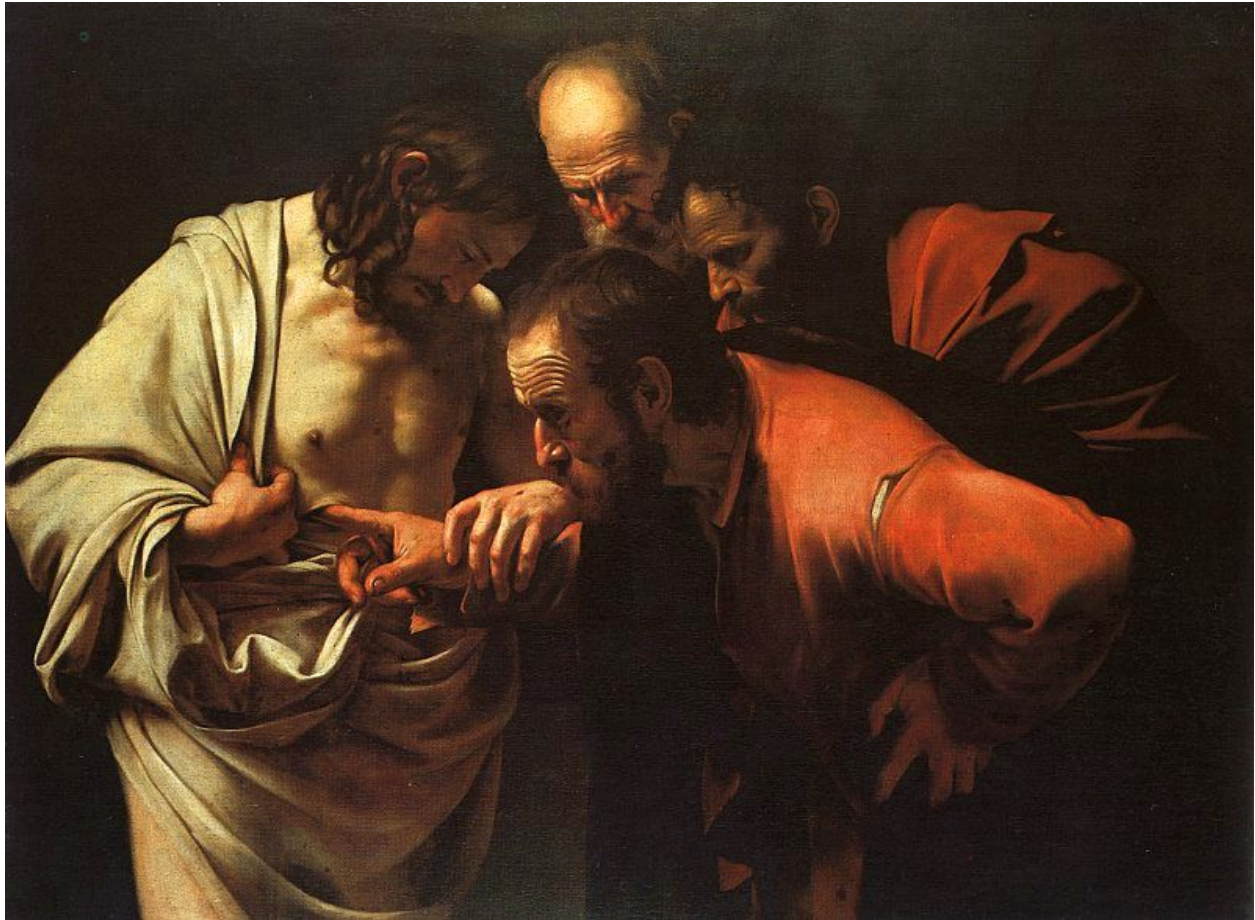
Note: Adapted from Caravaggio, Public Domain,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caravaggio_-
_The_Incredulity_of_Saint_Thomas.jpg#/media/File:Caravaggio_-
_The_Incredulity_of_Saint_Thomas.jpg

Each of the three elements of resurrection that Rambo identifies are intertwined, but can

be conceptually visualized as concentric circles. The innermost circle, at the heart of healing

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[3] Interestingly, Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (see Figure 7) is a remarkable example of the bloodless wounds that Rambo critiques.

from trauma, is the matter of befriending one's self and learning to live at peace within one's body. This peaceful befriending is both somatic and psychological, recognizing that any bifurcation of the two leaves each bereft. When considering the psychological or emotional element of peace within one's self, a vast array of psychotherapeutic frameworks can be employed, and employed fruitfully. Whether one conceptualizes this as an integration of the shadow, a la Carl Jung, an irenic, familial array of parts, a la Internal Family Systems, or in some other fashion, is less relevant than a resilient experience of peace within one's internal world. As Bessel van der Kolk (2014) importantly reminds, to locate trauma, and the work of trauma healing, purely in the mind or the brain, is to ignore the important role of the physical body. The body processes trauma and the experience of trauma responses is located there as well. Healing, then, involves not a perfection of the body, but a sense of peace within one's body and a belief, lived out, that one's body is not an enemy but a friend.

One insidious characteristic of trauma is its capacity to isolate and prey upon the isolated (Woodhouse et al., 2015). Prison, an already isolated environment in which incarcerated persons are forcibly detached from loved ones and natural support systems, provides fertile ground for past traumas to surface and for newly experienced traumas to have significant effect (Ogle et al., 2015). The political dynamics within a particular prison, housing unit, or cellblock can likewise serve to pull incarcerated persons apart.[4] The stress inflicted by the environment and the traumatizing experience of incarceration may pull the individual into the dorsal vagal system, creating a neurobiological barrier to connection and communication (Dana, 2018). The barriers to healthy relationships and community are legion, but as was described in the preceding case studies, not an impossibility.

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[4] Often, this is a tool used by authorities within the prison as a means of managing the environment.

Finding healthy community is more than forging healthy bonds with a group of others. It involves integrating into a particular culture, adopting a particular language-game, and finding one's place-in-relation to the others involved in the group. It is entirely possible for someone to connect well with particular individuals within a group, even all of the particular individuals within a group, but not integrate well into the group as a whole. How one relates to the particular individuals in a community is different from how one relates to the community as a whole (Young, 2008). To use 'finding healthy community' as a criterion for healing, then, involves an evaluation of more than the ability of the individual to connect with others in a way that leads to flourishing; it also considers the capacity to participate and thrive within a group of people. Those who have experienced trauma may well find the latter to be a greater challenge than the former. The stress involved with a one-to-one interaction can, for certain individuals, feel less challenging than confronting a group, something that can quickly become overwhelming.[5] Integrating into a group demands relational flexibility and responsiveness and a capacity to maintain concurrent relational responsibilities. All of these can be diminished by trauma and trauma responses (Matsakis, 1998). Healing, then, involves a restoration of, or growth within, the ability to do those things that groups demand, and in a way that leads to flourishing and health. Simply implementing trauma-learned responses or reverting to previous harmful strategies for mitigating stress, are not healing, though the identification of them can lead to important insight (Bonanno & Mancini, 2012). The sense that one derives satisfaction, enjoyment, and positive growth from a group, along with a concurrent sense that the members of that group derive satisfaction, enjoyment, and positive growth from their contribution to group is a positive indicator that healing is taking place.

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[5] This, of course, should not be taken as an absolute statement.

Rambo's final characteristic or resurrection, understood in this context as trauma healing, is a sense of spirit work. The phrase "spirit work" is not the terminology that Rambo herself employs, but is an adaptation that can be applied across faith traditions and, in an analogical sense, for those who do not subscribe to a belief in the supernatural at all.[6] A sense of spirit work involves a belief that a purpose is being achieved, perhaps even that an Other is at work, moving towards some positive outcome. This sense is not inherently teleological, though it can be understood in those terms, nor is it linear or inevitable. As Jurgan Moltmann (2020) insightfully observed in his Charles Gore lecture, if the conclusion is determined fixedly and the future cannot change, then all impetus to work in the present is lost. Either the goal is inevitably achieved, at which point effort need not be expended, or the goal cannot be achieved, at which point effort would be wastefully expended. Spirit work involves an openness to the future, grounded in the sense that the work of today is worthwhile. Cast in different terms, this characteristic can be termed hope.

Taken as a whole, Rambo's vision of resurrection, of a life lived at peace with one's body, in life-giving community, and with a sense of spirit work, offers a metric for evaluating growth and a goal for the therapeutic practice of art. Insofar as the therapeutic practice moves and encourages one towards a greater sense of peace with one's body, a healthier communal situatedness, or a broader appreciation of spirit working, it is successfully employed. Likewise, insight or learning that can lead to such growth is also a positive outcome of the practice. The preceding case studies demonstrate such engagement with art. The aesthetic framework presented in chapter three also has explanatory efficacy, clarifying why such engagement proved helpful. In the balance of this chapter, that explanatory power will be on display, through

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[6] One may recall Bella, who senses an Other, without subscribing to a belief in the Divine.

particular observations, rooted in the preceding case studies. These observations, while related, are distinct and will be addressed as such.

Art as Conversational Experience

As Oleg Bychcov (2016) summarizes, contemporary aesthetics emphasizes the engaged nature of art participation, as such terminology itself implies.[7] Art is participatory and inherently transformative. One cannot simply participate in art, truly engage with it, and walk away unchanged. At very minimum, the experience of the art has been added to the catalogue of one's experiences, but quite often the experience leaves the participant far more transformed than that. They walk away as if they have had a conversation, either with the artist, the art itself, or those who have participated with that work of art in the past. For better or worse, they have engaged with, even related with, another.

How the participant conceptualizes their engagement is less significant than the act of engaging itself. Raymond clearly had a sense of conversation with the author: confronting him and the powerful ones that employed his poetry for their own purposes. His perspective on the experience was entirely understandable within the realm of the natural: it encompassed persons and political structures. While not devoid of theological content, his understanding of the experience and process could be embraced by a wide swath of religious adherents. Carl, on the other hand, conceptualized his experience quite differently. Through dancing and drumming, chanting and singing, Carl understood his experience as an engagement with the Ancestors. He embraced a theological framework rooted in Native American spirituality. As such, it includes theological claims and assumptions that practitioners of other religious traditions would not grant

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[7] One could note a terminological shift away from 'art appreciation' and towards 'art participation' in the literature.

or embrace. Regardless, both Raymond and Carl understood their aesthetic experience as a matter of engaging with other persons, not simply with a thing.

Bella's participative experience went beyond that of Carl and Raymond. While both could have truthfully stated that their experience left them with a sense of being addressed, Bella's experience with Caravaggio's painting left her feeling seen.[8] Having projected elements of her experience onto St. Peter, her own reality became more apparent to her conscious understanding. She saw herself. Such an experience was a product of honest and authentic participation, conversation with the art and through the art with herself. While the person of the caregiver should not be erased from the context of the experience, it was the art itself that proved to be the conversation partner.

The aesthetic framework previously presented posits that art is a language game, an act of communication by the artist to whomever may participate in their work. Such an understanding allows for a straightforward understanding of the participative nature of art and opens opportunities for envisioning how such participation can result in healing. Communication, especially communication that takes place between individuals honestly and transparently presenting their authentic selves, is the fundamental framework for trauma healing (Herman, 2015).[9] The content of the artist's communication is less relevant than the experience of communicating but is certainly not irrelevant. The caregiver would be wise to take such

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[8] I draw here a distinction between addressing and seeing. To my mind, one may address another without attending to any sort of conscious feedback. The audience remains a thing. However, to see involves observing the other, and processing that information. To leave another feeling seen takes this a step further. It is a process that involves observation, processing, and expression. As such, Bella reporting feeling that the artist was able to incorporate information about her into the work, something that can only be the product of a dialogical engagement.

[9] This is not to claim that all art represents authentic, honest, or transparent communication from the artist. Artists may be seeking to deceive their participants, may be projecting a constructed self, or may be attempting to conceal themselves through their art. Such cases are not under consideration here.

considerations into account when selecting the art for participation, but the matter of hearing the other and feeling a sense of being heard, and perhaps even seen, is of primary significance.[10]

Transparent presentation and connection creates a space that the Holy resides (Buber, 1998). Bella, especially, expressed a sense of an Other, someone or something spiritual that filled the relational space created by authentic meeting. In so many ways, the work of trauma healing, within a theological context, is a matter of helping to shape a space in which the trauma survivor can experience the Holy and dwell in the presence of the Divine. By its very nature, such an experience is beyond the control of the caregiver; it is an act of faith, trusting that the Holy will provide what healing requires.[11] As a sponge soaks up water, so the Holy pulls the conversation partners into tan awareness of the Divine presence, revealing the One who is always already there, yet is perpetually becoming. The preceding case studies demonstrate, at least in those particular instances, that such faith was rewarded by progress and healing, a result not only of the human to human connection, but of the Holy's faithful work to bring forth flourishing and wholeness.[12]

The Therapeutic social practice of art is an assisted practice. The caregiver's role is vital, not only in facilitating communication between the trauma survivor and the artist, but also in serving as witness to the experience of the Holy. As Rambo (2010) contends, it is the act of witnessing that serves as the pivot point, the boundary between death and life that can lead to resurrected living. The gift of witness, inherent in the therapeutic practice, helps to bring what was fractured or even shattered together. The caregiver is that witness, standing in the gap

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[10] This very issue is a topic of discussion in the next chapter.

[11] It is at this point that particular faith traditions may have much more to add, helping to provide language to understand and practices to expand the experience of the Holy. For the purposes of trauma healing, however, helping to a facilitate the experience of the Divine for those trapped in a lifeless and spirit-devoid environment is helpful enough for the present consideration.

[12] Kindly note here the broad sense of the term faith, a term which can be applied both within and outside of particular religious traditions or theological commitments.

between death and life, and ordained in that space is the spirit (Rambo, 2010). Such spirit work is not only the means of healing, but a foretaste of resurrected life. The therapeutic social practice of art, then, provides a helpful framework not only to help facilitate a sense of spirit work within the trauma survivor, but also a space in which the powerful and healing witness work of the caregiver can support the survivor in the journey of befriending themselves. Inherently relational, this process can likewise encourage and strengthen the survivor's capacity to connect into healthy relational matrices.

This is not the only way in which art qua language-game can be a useful lens for understanding the experience, and therapeutic benefit, of art participation. As the following three observations, related to empathy, imagination, and creativity, demonstrate, the conception of art as a language-game opens up further space for reflection, exploration, and insight.

Art as Empathetic Exercise

With a history within the research stretching back more than fifty years, the importance of empathy in learning a second language is well established (Guiora et al., 1971). While theories explaining just why it is that empathy is helpful can diverge significantly, the data seems definitive: those with a greater capacity for empathy often concurrently enjoy a greater capacity to learn a second language (Chen, 2013). If, as the proposed aesthetic framework suggests, art is a language-game, then one can reasonably posit that participants in art can grow in their fluency with respect to a particular artist. The matter of learning how to interpret and experience an artist's work can be seen as analogous to learning a new language. Certain grammatical rules are used and particular vocabulary is employed, but beyond that, the language is spoken within a culture and communicated with a tone. As any language instructor would testify, learning that second language is far more than memorizing words and rules; it involves entering into a

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different world. It is precisely at this point that empathy becomes relevant. Again, whether it is empathy that allows one to adopt a second identity that inhabits that world, as Guiora argues, or it's a willingness to engage openly with those who are different, as Chen argues, is less significant than the fact that empathy increases both the likelihood and effectiveness of each move. Returning to the aesthetic analogy, it can be persuasively argued that one's capacity for empathy can aid in one's capacity to participate effectively in works of art.

What that data does not demonstrate, though it may suggest, is the converse statement on language learning. Do those who learn a second language, in so doing, increase their capacity for empathy? If that is the case, then when applied aesthetically, yet another reason why art participation contributes to trauma healing can begin to come into focus. Consider, again, the second element of Rambo's description of resurrected living: living in life-giving community. One hallmark of life-giving relationships is empathy, a concern for the other and the capacity to see from their perspective. Absent the capacity for empathy, one would struggle mightily to hold onto relationships that are a source of encouragement and vitality for all involved. If engaging in the therapeutic social practice of art provides a context in which that capacity is expanded or the skill of empathy is practiced, then it would likewise encourage that second characteristic of resurrected living.

The participants in the Lifers Supporting Lifers (LSL) group described an experience of increased empathy within themselves. This experience was primarily focused on their growing appreciation of different styles of music, but it was also extended to those who advocated on behalf of those styles. Not only did one member express a deeper appreciation for country music, but also less prejudice towards those who enjoyed country music and its culture. The conversation within the group, when processing such observations, focused on the concept of

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openness, and the importance of remaining open to the artist and the art itself. This conscious act of the will to fight against closing off or hardening one's self can be seen as quite similar to empathy. Did, however, this practice expand the participant's capacity to be empathetic?

My answer to that question is a qualified no. This does not, however, discount the possibility that engaging with art can increase empathy. Martha Nussbaum (1990), in her essays collected as *Love's Knowledge*, rightly argues that works of fiction can spur moral growth, specifically development of moral imagination. Commenting in support of her work, Duncan, Bess-Montgomery, and Oinubi (2017), argue on the basis of neurobiological research that engaging with works of fiction can aid in the development of social intelligence broadly and empathy more specifically. However, in my estimation, that is not precisely what took place in the LSL group.

In my view, the participants did not have a greater capacity to practice empathy at the end of the group's tenure as they did at the beginning. However, the willingness of each member to engage empathetically had increased. That increased willingness is simply the product of positive reinforcement. Within the safety of the LSL group, the participants were able to express empathy and reap a positive reward from that work. Having experienced that positive reward, they were motivated to be empathetic again, and perhaps to a greater extent. This is in strong contrast to the incarcerated environment and, for many of them, their life experiences prior to incarceration. Within a prison setting, empathy can be seen as a dangerous trait, a characteristic that others can exploit or a means of manipulation. Faced with such negative consequences, it should come as no surprise that most incarcerated persons do not readily express empathy. However, once they were exposed to the positive possibilities that could be experienced, even within the traumatizing environment of prison, each participant demonstrated a greater openness

to engaging, at least with a certain group of others, empathetically. While it might be the case that the group's engagement in the therapeutic practice of art expanded their ability to show empathy, it certainly did increase their willingness to take that risk. The fruit of that risk was a small community of individuals who were engaged in life-giving relationships, not only one-to-one, but also one-to-group. They experienced healing.

Art as an Act of Imagination

"Let me tell you something, my friend," Red says to Andy in *Shawshank Redemption*, a classic prison film. "Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane" (Darabont, 1994). With those words, Red gives voice to a cynical point of view prevalent within prison walls: the belief that hope, a desire for something better than the day to day grind found in prison, will only torture and torment the heart and mind of the incarcerated. Better, advises Red, to eschew hope all together and accept the painful reality of prison for what it is. Andy, however, rejects this cynical point of view and, in a letter to Red once he has escaped, writes, "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies" (Darabont, 1994). Andy, by the time he writes that letter, has gone on a journey of growth and development, of actualization, and writes from a point-of-view of freedom. He was healed in ways that Red, and most behind prison walls, had not. The therapeutic practice of art, however, can aid in that journey, through the exercise of imagination and creativity.

Paul Ricoeur (1981) offered a critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of imagination. In Ricoeur's mind, Sartre's understanding of productive imagination simply was not productive enough, or, as Lior Levy (2014) formulates, was merely reproductive. Sartre's imagination, argues Ricoeur, was limited by its available resources, using only what had been experienced as source material. As such, it never truly produced something new, only a rearrangement or

reimagining of what already is.[13] What Ricoeur highlights in his argument is the distinction drawn in a previous chapter between imagination and creativity. Before addressing the differences in these concepts, and how the social practice of art provides a helpful framework for understanding how art can aid in healing from trauma, a helpful observation may be made that applies equally to both.

Both creativity and imagination are inherently hopeful activities. They look at lacunae and conceptually fill the space with something new, either constructed out of existing realities or bringing forth something new entirely. In order to function, and to find motivation, both require a fundamental belief that the present facts are not immutable, and that change is possible. In prison, imagination is found everywhere, while creativity is in short supply. The reason for this may well be found in Red's advice to Andy. Imagination, while an act of hope, is focused on the reality that exists, the materials at hand or the opportunities presented within the strictures of the incarcerated community; it is a practical hope. Creativity, on the other hand, requires a hope in something altogether new, and for many incarcerated persons, that is simply a bridge too far.

The therapeutic social practice of art encourages and reinforces both imagination and creativity. However, because of the unique environment inside of prison, and its unique effects outlined above, the manner in which both are encouraged and reinforced are different. Both are evident in the working of the LSL group. As with empathy, the members of the LSL group found positive reinforcement for their imagination, but this was not a new experience for them. Much of incarcerated life is a matter of making do with the materials at hand. Whether it is cooking a meal from commissary purchases and meal leftovers or building a "stinger" from spare parts so

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[13] While I do not personally find Ricoeur's arguments persuasive, and in a previous chapter I argue precisely the opposite as I drew the distinction between imagination and creativity, Ricoeur's argument does serve to helpfully highlight Sartre's primary emphasis on imagination as a reassembling of existing parts.

that water can be heated the capacity for imagination inside of a prison is nearly limitless.[14]

Likewise, the rewards. Those who demonstrate an ability to take the mundane items available to every incarcerated person and manufacture something unique can be handsomely compensated within the incarcerated economic system.[15] What the LSL group provided, however, was a reframing of the concept.

Imagination, the ability to look at what currently exists and rearrange it in a new a helpful way, is a skill that can find application across domains. It does not need to be confined to simply the tangible or the mechanical. Imagination can be used to reimagine relationships, thinking patterns, and personal habits as well. Yet, it is one of the great ironies of prison life that while mechanical ingenuity (one branch of imagination) is rewarded and common, interpersonal problem-solving (another branch of imagination) is rarely rewarded and is far less common. Frequently, incarcerated persons fall into a fixed way of thinking about problems or conflict; the LSL group allowed its members to explore that reality and see how their organic imagination skills might be applied. Reinforcing their already existing imaginative capacity built confidence in its members that they could reorganize their relationships in a healthy way.

As students learn a new language, they often begin to substitute vocabulary, inserting new terms into their existing language (Nunan, 1998). Rather than asking "welcome, my friend, how are you?" a new student of Welsh may say "croeso, my ffrind. How are you?" This demonstrates not only an eagerness to apply new learning, in this case particular terms, but also the intuitive use of cognates across languages. Something similar happens when one grows in fluency with an artistic language-game. As one becomes more familiar with an art form, they

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[14] A stinger is a common tool, technically contraband, often crafted using a wire with a plug and metal objects and used to heat water. A stinger is a fundamental tool in the incarcerated kitchen within a cell.

[15] It likely goes without saying that every prison includes an alternate economy grounded in a bartering system in which favors, advice, experience, phone time, information, and tangible items are commodified.

may begin to adopt that skill, and related skills, in other domains. Thus, as members of the LSL group grew in their comfort level with artistic imagination, they found reinforcement of imagination in other aspects of their lives and opportunities to utilize it in other ways. This can find application not only in terms of interpersonal healing, but intrapersonal healing as well.

Art and Creativity

Creativity, on the other hand, is an exercise of hope that goes beyond what is readily seen and applicable. It conceives of that-which-does-not-presently-exist and figures out how to bring it into being. It is not an alteration of the existing; it is the start of something new. The hope that permeates this activity is precisely the kind of hope that Red warned Andy about, the chasing after that-which-does-not-exist, and can lead to, in his terms, insanity. Many in the LSL group accepted this type of thinking as Gospel. While they were willing to grant that imagination had its place, any sort of thinking that endeavored to bring forth something completely new was both a chasing after the wind and a recipe for heartache. This mindset parallels what Victor Frankl (2006) described as the second phase of adaptation to life in a concentration camp: "the phase of relative apathy; in which he [sic] achieved a kind of emotional death" (Frankl, 2006, p. 20). Their ultimate acceptance of creativity as a helpful characteristic or skill, came only when the limits of imagination had been reached and the results determined to be insufficient. In the minds of many LSL participants, their ultimate goals were beyond the constraints of the present, and imaginative thinking simply would not get them there. What was needed was something new, and that is where creativity came into play.

My fascination with ancient languages began in high school, when I took my first course in Latin, but it truly blossomed as I studied Greek as an undergraduate. Greek, to my mind, was not nearly as encumbered as the modern romance languages I had focused on theretofore. There

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was a freedom to the language that could be somewhat achieved in Latin, but found far more glorious application in Greek. Furthermore, as my first experience of a language using letters other than the Roman alphabet, there was an exotic quality and, as I learned the language, a sense of accomplishment. I was reminded at the end of my first semester, and would in term remind the students for which I was a TA, just what a step it was to go from looking at a page of Greek letters and seeing nothing but a series of squiggles to seeing words and sentences that could be pronounced. For some members of the LSL group, learning the language-games of music was like learning a new dialectic of a previously-known language, simple and comfortable, but for others, it was a paradigm-shifting event that involved learned something completely foreign; their experience paralleled my mind-expanding joy in learning Greek.

For the latter, the therapeutic social practice of art, as put into practice by the LSL group, brought them to an appreciation of things that felt to them as fundamentally new. Especially as they moved into creating art themselves, they sensed a capacity within themselves, latent though it was, to bring forth something new. This creative practice, like the practice of empathy, found positive reinforcement. Like imagination, the potential of creativity to be applied in inter- and intra-personal ways, was also explored, once surfaced by the therapeutic social practice of art.

Art as Social Communication

Carl's experience of Native American drumming, chanting, and dance was a social experience. It took place within a circle, a close community of individuals with shared history, values, and purposes.[16] When he was welcomed into the circle, it was with an expressed intent: to honor Creator and the Ancestors and to hear from them. The practice of rhythmic drumming,

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[16] It is interesting that incarcerated individuals with vastly different backgrounds prior to their incarceration can bond over the shared history of their incarceration process. Perhaps they both spent time at a particular prison or endured classification at the same facility. Such shared experiences became touch points for relational connection.

repetitive chants, and physical motion were holy traditions, passed down from generation to generation, with the legitimate hope that a bond could be established with those who had gone before, and that is exactly what Carl reported. He testified to experiences of presence and of a deep, spiritual sense of communion. While difficult, or even impossible, to capture in words, Carl left many of those experiences feeling that he had received a message or purpose from his Ancestors, and even from Creator. The aesthetic framework presented here provides a way of understanding the experience that Carl describes, placing it in terms that are both respectful of his theology and applicable beyond the context of Native American spirituality.

If, as has been proposed, art is a language-game and is a means of communication as well as a message itself, then this would be applicable to the religious rituals Carl engaged in as well: drumming, chanting, and dancing.[17] What makes Carl's experience unique among the preceding case studies is the decidedly social nature of the practice and the less than obvious identification of Carl's communication partner, or partners. In a paradigmatic understanding of the therapeutic practice of art, one is able to identify an artist or artists who bring forth the art into being. They, in this typical occurrence, are those who are speaking a language-game, offering their art as communication to whomever chooses to participate in it. But what about a practice that inherently involves improvisation? What about those practices, and products, that are not clearly created at any particular point, but evolved within a community over time, even generations? Can these cases be understood as communication? I suggest that yes, these practices, such as sacred dance, that involve significant improvisation according to rules and forms developed over generations, can be understood as communication, not from a particular individual but from the

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[17] This is not to discount the theology Carl embraced. Even if the aesthetic framework provides an explanation or understanding of Carl's religious practice that does not depend on the supernatural, that does not in itself provide evidence that spiritual realities are not in play.

community that formed it and from those whose participation in it also helped to shape the practice or performance of it. When Carl learned and embraced the practice of sacred dance, and engaged in it, he truly was hearing from the Ancestors, in the form of the messages passed down by the community according to the language-game of the dance. The voices of all those who contributed to the community and to the formation of the dance can be heard when participating in that language-game, just as Carl experienced (Born et al., 2017).

The experience of hearing a choir is distinct from the experience of listening to a solo. The choir is able to provide a richer, fuller, and more diverse sound. Likewise, a painting that employs a wide palate of colors provides a much richer visual experience than one that deals only in the shades of a single color. This is not to discount the beauty and value of the solo or the monochromatic work, but simply to surface that the participant's experience is aurally and neurobiologically different.[18] In the case of Carl, the chorus of voices that he heard opened him to a richer perspective on his world. Unable to conceptualize his experience within his preexisting categories, Carl expanded his worldview, giving space for what I would label spirit-work. Sensing the Ancestors was a profoundly spiritual experience for Carl, and the experience within the Circle laid groundwork for greater sensitivity to the non-tangible facets of the world around him. This correlates well with the third characteristic of resurrected living: a recognition of spirit-work.

Shelly Rambo discusses a similar ritual in her text, *Resurrecting Wounds*. In her assessment, the healing and redemptive work of the ritual was created between wounded persons, the spirit descending and filling the space as wound called out to wound, crying out for peace (Rambo, 2017). In terms of the aesthetic framework, a theopoetics emerges between

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[18] While at different moments in listening to a choir one may be able to detect particular voices, especially with a well-blended choir, the experience is generally one of hearing "the choir" as a whole.

participants in the circle as they authentically present themselves to one another and to the Holy, participating in the artistic rituals handed down to them through generations. This process also surfaces other wounds, wounds experienced by those very generations who passed down the rituals to present day. As the circle participates, honors Creator, and beckons the Ancestors, the wounds of historical trauma, genocide, relocation, and tyrannical rule, are put on display. Some rituals are explicit, crushing strawberries on the ground as a visual reminder of the blood shed on the *Nunna daul Tsuny*, while others simply bear witness indirectly to the loss and devastation suffered by so many Native American peoples.[19] It is the work of the community to bring these traumas to mind not to retraumatize, but to do the hard work of ensuring that those wounds would never be erased (Rambo, 2017).

While not explicit in the understanding of resurrected living presented above, reckoning with historical trauma is a significant aspect of personal healing. The therapeutic social practice of art can aid in this as well. Such work certainly results in positive personal and interpersonal outcomes, but that is not the primary objective. Carl began to see the Ancestors not as pristine perfections, but as wounded, yet living beings. As such, he was able to grow into an understanding of himself, not as one who needed to be perfected, but as one who could flourish despite wounds. This shift within him and his thinking allowed him to take a step closer to befriending himself, at the heart of healing from trauma.

To this point, our discussion has primarily centered on the concept that art is itself a language-game, brought forth by the artist and received by the participant in a trialogue, incorporating the caregiver or peer. A second element of the aesthetic framework that also can serve to elucidate the preceding case studies is the emergent theopoetics. This element of the

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[19] *Nunna daul Tsuny* can be translated from a Cherokee dialect as "the trail where they cried."

framework can shed additional light on what was happening and how the therapeutic practice led to differentiated levels of healing.

The Power of Projected Meaning

During the discussion of social practices of art and the various meanings a work of art may have for participants, Wolterstorff's category of projected meaning was presented. In essence, Wolterstorff argues, an author or other artist can create a world, a setting that is more or less fleshed out, and within which a work of art can have a meaning different from the actual, instantiated world of the participant. Genres of fiction, such as fantasy or science fiction, rather easily fit this mold, telling stories that take place in fictitious universes, but in a sense all novels create projected worlds.[20] No author is able to create a world that is an exact projection of the actual world; at best it is a replication from their point of view. Projected worlds, then, may be differentiated from the actual world by small or large degrees, and that level of difference can be a useful tool in the hands of an author or cinematographer. Wolterstorff points out within the context of social protest art that while the projected world must be similar enough to the actual world to evoke learning about the participant's present context, it may also need to be different enough to highlight the issue or concern the author intends to bring to light (Wolterstorff, 2015). Likewise, with the therapeutic social practices; the projected world must allow the participant to see themselves, their circumstances, or their world accurately, but also with a differing and helpful perspective.

This philosophical work rhymes well with the neurobiological research conducted by Marco Sperduti and others (2016), who investigated what has traditionally been termed the paradox of fiction. This "paradox," with a history going back to Aristotle, inquires about the

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[20] For simplicity's sake I will speak of novels, but certainly other art forms, such as cinema and its sub-genres, can create projected worlds.

seeming emotional responses to fictional characters and events. While a detailed delineation of that philosophical history or a lengthy examination of proposed solutions is beyond the scope of this present work, the neurobiological research conducted by Sperduti et al. does have helpful bearing on the therapeutic social practice of art.[21] According to the research presented by that team, there is a noticeable difference in the neurobiological response, specifically in the lateral fronto-pariental regions and the midline cortical structures, when an individual is presented with characters and events that are identified as fictional, rather than actual (Sperduti et al., 2016). Consciously or, more likely, subconsciously, individuals seem to be able to hold in tension the realistic experience and the known fact that they are not taking place in the actual world. Further, the emotive reaction within the participant can be categorically different than the emotions expressed in the work itself, though a certain level of *mimesis* is certainly in play (Worth, 2000). The difference in neurobiological response diminishes, however, when the fictional characters and events bear a similarity to characters or events from an individual's memory. The brain evidences heightened arousal in those cases, though not necessarily reaching the same level as those experiences labeled as true or real. While significant emotional arousal is not always directly correlated to a willingness to act, it can be assumed that is likely in most instances.

That did seem to be the case for Raymond. After reading and entering into the world of *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, he was able to both understand that the world was fictitious, while also recognizing how that world could inform his own. He felt at home in that projected world precisely because of the similarities it held. However, that projected world did not include some of the constraints that he experienced in the actual world, allowing him a greater sense of

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[21] In brief, Aristotle posited that emotions, specifically παθος, can only be aroused by physical entities. Thus, while drama may elicit reactions, it is not the physical characters or events that do so (Aristotle, 330/1951). This conception has been rejected by most contemporary philosophers, but that rejection does not, in itself, solve the paradox.

freedom and autonomy both to speak and to act. Raymond used that sense of empowerment to fuel the work that he needed to do internally, in order to befriend himself, and to situated himself in relation to the world. The greatest gift, however, that Raymond received was a language, a way of speaking about himself and his challenges that held space both for his own pain and wounds and for hope in a renewed arrangement of relationships and power.

A Theopoetics of Resistance

In George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, citizens of Oceania live under the constant control and surveillance of the Party, run by an entity known as Big Brother. The Though Police enforce the government's control not only of the population's actions, but of their thoughts as well, seeking out and punishing throughtcrime. One means of control is the implementation of a new language, Newspeak, a simplified dialect of English designed to restrict the ability of the populace to articulate, or even to imagine, concepts deemed subversive. Syme, a lexicographer who works for the Party, explains to the protagonist, Winston Smith:

> Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?
> In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be
> no words in which to express it…Every year fewer and fewer words, and the
> range of consciousness always a little smaller (Orwell, 1961, p. 45).

Orwell's profound insight is that language hold's incredible power over thought. While not discounting the efficacy and import of emotional information, concepts cannot be expressed, formulated, or analyzed unless they are expressed in language. If that language, then, can be controlled, then the boundaries for thought can be rigidly enforced.

The reality of many incarcerated persons and other survivors of trauma, is not that an external power exerts control over their thoughts and imaginations, but rather that their trauma,

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shatters their sense of being, time, body, and memory has also fractured their language, freezing it in place and, in many instanced, diminishing their lexicons (Rambo, 2010). Left with a language incapable of capturing both their experiences and their hopes, they exist in an Orwellian state of dystopian subjugation, lacking the lexical tools needed to express who they hope to become. Inviting participants into a projected world, a world unencumbered by the constraints of the present, shattered world, affords them they opportunity to exercise their language in new ways, and even to develop a new language of becoming, growth, and hope. Meeting with the artist, truly hearing them, and experiencing the emergent experience of the Holy also creates a space where communication, utilizing this new language born out of that shared experience in the projected environment, can take place. This new language holds the possibility to convey a vision of a new and different future, a future of hope.

Raymond's experience demonstrates that very experience. Having entered the projected world of the poem, he experienced an emotional reaction. While that emotional reaction was negative, it prompted conversation, and in some sense resolution. The role of the caregiver becomes critical in that instance. While the primary task in such an instance is to serve as witness, the caregiver remains a participant in the trialogue. While the emergent theopoetics is not an organic language for the caregiver like it is for the participant, embracing elements of that renewed language can open up space during later, reflective conversation. That language, and the possibilities it contains, can be capitalized on, whether it is focused on befriending one's self, developing healthy bonds, recognizing spirit work, or engaging in restorative justice work.

Bella, like Raymond, developed a theopoetics, though the terminology she employed was largely an amalgamation of words she had previously employed. What was new, for her, were the combinations and how they could be used. Fundamentally, she learned that the terms that had

been used against her could be used by her in defiance to the oppression she experienced. She subverted the language of control to develop a language of resistance (Teke, 2013). In a remarkable act of will, she was able to employ her language as a tool of her own power, to counter the discourse that held her in subjugation (Foucault, 1971). That was only possible when the emotive force of the words were restructured, and the pain they had inflicted on her had been processed. Thus equipped, she was able to fill the silence with her words, or, in the terminology of Audre Lorde (1984), she transformed the silence into language. Bella had learned the lesson Lorde proclaims:

> We can learn to work and speak when we are afraid in the same
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> way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired. For we
>
> have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for
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> language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final
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> luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us"
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> (Lorde, 1984, p. 44).

Carl's renewed language of self did not develop exclusively out of his participation in artistic religious rituals, but also from the dialogical work he engaged in afterward, reflecting on the experience of the art. The emergent theopoetics of the aesthetic framework need not only be employed in the immediate context of the art participation, but on reflection as well. As I worked with Carl, we found that the language and framework of Internal Family Systems matched well with his internal experience and his experience of his religious rituals. We found ourselves organically using a hybrid language, informed by both but helpful and constructive for Carl. This trialogically developed language helped to form a framework for growth in all three of the domains of resurrected living.

Art and Internal Family Systems

Carl's story illustrates how participation in art can assist in work that is done apart from the participation itself. Internal Family Systems (IFS), with its visualization of the internal world and differentiation of parts into managers, firefighters, and exiles alongside, or perhaps blended with, the Self can be easily integrated with art participation, or be used as a means of exploring insights garnered from the experience of art (Lavergne, 2004). Carl's theological system, focused on interactions with persons, was well-suited, but that does not exclude others, whose experience with works of art do not readily produce an internal image of persons. Key to the therapeutic practice of art is the development of sensitive listening. If art is indeed a language-game, and the artist(s) is indeed communicating, then developing the capacity to listen, to receive and decode that communication is critical. Indeed, participating in art can become an exercise, increasing one's sensitivity and improving their capacity to receive. This is an exceptionally helpful skill for those working with IFS. The ability to identify and to listen to what an exile, or other part, is attempting to communicate is a primary skill. That is precisely what Carl did, recognizing his teenaged part, and listening carefully to him. Likewise, Bella heard the chorus of exiles who echoed forth their pain, and grew to value the truth they spoke rather than feeling overwhelmed by their agony.

This is not to say that this aesthetic framework cannot present challenges to IFS work. That can well be the case. Wellness, in IFS, is a matter of residing in an unblended self, enjoying a peaceful arrangement of parts (Schwartz, 1999). Differentiating between Self and parts is central, allowing their voices to be heard, but not to become dominant ensures that Self remains in control. The therapeutic social practice of art actively invites yet another voice, the voice of an other, to speak. This, in itself, many trigger protective actions on the part of Managers.

Furthermore, the emergent theopoetics is an inherently trialogical language, developed organically in conversation and authentic meeting. As such, it can be difficult to ascertain the power dynamic underlying the language. The fundamental theological assumption of this framework is that when the Holy's presence emerges and the theopoetics is developed, the language will itself be virtuous, life-giving, and contribute to flourishing. However, in terms of IFS, ensuring that the theopoetics is not itself subverted by a part, is a careful, but important work.

Art and Restorative Justice

The context for all of this work has been the prison, the incarcerated community created not by choice, but by the coercive power of the state. Each individual had experienced the American mass incarceration system, and had, at one or more points in their lives, received a prison sentence, a judgement delivered on behalf of the people of the United States. Fairly or unfairly, truthfully or untruthfully, each had been declared delinquent, someone who, for the sake of the broader society, needed to be locked away for a period of time. While rhetoric may have been employed claiming that the punishment was meant as a means of rehabilitation, and that the sentence may actually be good for the one incarcerated, the primary aim of the mass incarceration system is political control (Alexander, 2012). This reality has not been a focus of the present work, but the gravity of it cannot be ignored. Incarcerated persons may work to befriend themselves, engage in healthy relationships, and be at peace with the work of spirit, but throughout it all, they are still held in prison and labeled as ones who are not at peace with the broader community. They stand in violation of laws or mores and as long as they wear the uniform of a

"convict," society views them as such.[22] Such a position is not exclusive, of course, to those who are physically incarcerated. As millennia of Christians have reflected in their liturgy, all are imprisoned in some sense, and subject to coercive control.

Restorative justice works against such realities, it seeks to meet the needs of stakeholders, restore relationships, and encourage peace through means other than mass incarceration or other acts of coercive power (Zehr, 2005). The use of art in such endeavors are well-documented, and to explore fully how art participation can encourage the work of restorative justice is beyond the scope of this present work. One story may suffice to illustrate that power of art participation. Bullack et al. (2018) have demonstrated through their research that corporate singing not only improves one's emotional state, as all singing typically does, but it also increases the participants sense of social connectedness.

This was on display during a restorative justice event held at my prison. Incarcerated persons, their family members, victim advocates, and a few victims of violent crime came together, in the presence of supportive prison staff, to dialogue. Organizers had brainstormed a myriad of ways to begin the event, wanting to address the significant anxiety in the room and perhaps "break the ice" in a way that would promote dialogue. Recognizing the events proximity to Christmas, one suggestion was to begin with the group singing of some holiday songs. As a multifaith chaplain, as I was concerned for religious inclusion, but a quick check with the participants revealed that none of them would feel offended by references to a Christian holiday.

One brave incarcerated person, Julio, even offered to lead the singing, using a guitar provided by chapel staff. Despite the fact that each of the participants was aware of the plan, the

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[22] Of course, there are exceptions and society is not a monolith. Particular incarcerated individuals may be seen differently. Particular individuals within society may view incarcerated persons differently, but the reality of their position outside of the mainstream of society, marginalize and disenfranchised, cannot be denied.

corporate singing did not begin auspiciously. Julio essentially sang a solo, with a few tentative voices joining in. However, by the time the chorus of his second song, Jingle Bells, arrived, a majority of the participants were singing. Smiles began to form on faces and Julio yucked it up while singing Up on the Housetop. Rather quickly, the participants began to sense a feeling of connection, as their mirror neurons matched one another and they engaged in joyful singing. What could have been a disastrous start turned into exactly the type of introductory activity organizers had hoped for, and stakeholders immediately felt a greater sense of community and connection. It would be quite a stretch to suggest that simply gathering as a choir can repair all of the fissures and fractures in contemporary American society. However, mutual participation in art can help to bond small groups of people, situating them for dialogue and the important work of social justice.

Conclusion

The aesthetic framework of social practice, language-game, and emergent theopoetics helps to explain why the individuals in the preceding case studies found art participation to be beneficial in their healing journey. Participants found that engaging with art and artists in trialogue helped to create a space of authentic meeting, a space the Holy permeates. Furthermore, the trialogical encounters with art helped to reinforce empathy, encourage imagination, and foster creativity, all of which are helpful as individuals work towards healing from trauma. Entering into the projected world of a work of art also freed participants to explore themselves and their world in a position of safety and comfort. A new language, a language capable of conceptualizing resurrected living also emerged, aiding in the therapeutic work of the caregiver. All of these benefits can be understood from the perspective of the aesthetic framework.

Applying these lessons effectively, to the greatest benefit of trauma survivors is the topic to which we now turn.

Chapter VIII: Practical Considerations

Heretofore, our conversation has remained rather esoteric. The presentation of the aesthetic framework and analysis of the case studies through the lens of that framework may have seemed less than directly applicable for those in the trenches, doing the hard work of caregiving for those who have survived and are still experiencing trauma. Therefore, with a nod to Aristophanes, and a bow to Socrates, we will descend from the heavens, through the clouds, and to the solid ground, where those who have survived, and are surviving trauma, reside. In the chapter that follows we will answer some practical questions, aimed at those who will provide care for trauma survivors, always with an eye on that subset of trauma survivors who are living within environments that continue to harm, such as those who are presently incarcerated.[1] Once those questions have been addressed, we will examine a few general topics and consider a broad framework for employing art as an aid to trauma recovery within the context of pastoral care.

Is This for Everyone?

Within the walls of many prisons, hypermasculinity is commonplace. Machismo and a constantly evolving yet rather predictable understanding of what it is to be a 'man,' can be rather quickly ascertained. Emotions are to be hidden. Physical toughness and intellectual cunning are to be displayed. Relationships are functional and transactional. Religion is respected, provided that religion remains within acceptable boundaries. Anything labeled effeminate is avoided and mocked, as a further display of manhood. Often, art and artistic expression falls within that category. With the probable exception of music of particular genres, and the possible exception of visual arts of particular subjects, art, the appreciation of art, and the creation of art lies outside of the mainstream of prison life. This reality creates a barrier to the therapeutic practice of art.

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[1] We will not address in this chapter questions that may be posed by those very trauma survivors, except in those cases where such questions would inform the practice of caregiving.

While the privacy and privilege of pastoral encounters may afford some level of shielding for participants, the prevailing bias against participation in art is a factor that caregivers must address and overcome with many incarcerated trauma survivors.

Other environments may include similar biases among certain individuals seeking care. Normalizing participation in art can be helpful, as can addressing it directly along with those beliefs that formulate the substructure of such bias. The existence of such prejudice certainly does not preclude incarcerated persons from engaging with art, and finding significant therapeutic benefits. It may inform the selection of art (a topic to be discussed shortly), and remains a factor throughout the process, but it is not insurmountable. It can rear its head in a variety of contexts, and often becomes a default excuse for those who do not want to proceed with pastoral care. As survivors begin to engage with art, they meet with challenges or find the process a struggle, and in such moments survivors may be tempted to discount their own ability and reference the belief that art simply isn't for them. At such times, skill teaching may be helpful, but emotional encouragement is certainly in order.

Healing from trauma is idiosyncratic (Herman, 2015). While themes emerge when considering large groups, there simply is no one-size-fits-all intervention or treatment for those who have survived trauma (van der Kolk, 2014). Even the most beneficial of practices are not universally applicable, though the more pliable or flexible of them can find helpful implementation for a large percentage of those seeking healing. Such is the case with the use of art. The therapeutic social practices of art are immensely flexible, grounded not only in the immense variety of artistic forms, artists, and voices, but also in the varied *ways* individuals can engage with a particular work of art. The therapeutic social practice is broadly applicable, but not universally so, and it is important for caregivers to recognize when it should not be employed.

One group of individuals who would not be good candidates for incorporating art are those who remain stridently or adamantly opposed to doing so. Whether it is because of the bias discussed above, other foundational beliefs, or for other reasons altogether, some individuals may not feel comfortable engaging with art in the context of pastoral care. Their answer may be 'never' or it may be 'not now,' but both wishes should be respected. Consent is integral. If a trauma survivor does not commit to the process, it is destined to fail. While the case studies presented earlier document successful engagements with art, what should not be missed is that engaging with art is a skill that develops with practice, and immediate results are rarely produced. It takes commitment, on the part of both the caregiver and the survivor, and those who are unwilling or unable to make such a commitment should not be introduced to the practice prematurely.

The indexical nature of the practice is also relevant here. While individuals such as Bella engaged deeply with the work of art with which they are presented, more superficial interactions with art can also be fruitful. A brief interaction with a song, or a surface-level reading of a poem can help to facilitate conversation, call forth beliefs and feelings, or give voice to experiences previously unexpressed. The therapeutic benefit is limited only by the imagination of the caregiver and survivor, and just a brief dialogue regarding a work of art can help to establish the practice in the pastoral relationship. Engagements may grow gradually more significant and fruitful as the relationship between caregiver and survivor matures, and as the comfort-level with art increases. It is also certainly worthy of mentioning that some works of art simply do not "click" for individuals. A song, poem, sculpture, or painting may hold deep resonance for one, but only little significance for another. Sometimes, the language spoken by the artist is simply so

foreign and unrecognizable that its message is missed entirely. In such cases, there are no value judgements to be made, but simply a recognition of difference.

In addition to those who are unwilling to participate with art, are those for whom participation may not be possible, be limited in a significant way, or may not stand to benefit significantly from the process. These individuals would include those who because of differences in ability or sensory perception find participation in all or some forms of art to be impossible, exceedingly difficult, or a source of pain, both physically or psychologically. Likewise, those for whom insight or internal monologue is impaired or impossible might find the practice difficult or unhelpful. Psychosis and certain neurological challenges are also contraindications for this intervention. The bottom line for the caregiver is to proceed cautiously and carefully, taking their cues from the survivor and exploring gently the possibility that therapeutically engaging with art holds promise for healing.

Should Some Art Be Avoided?

One of the most critical considerations for the caregiver when it comes to the therapeutic social practice of art is the selection of the work or works of art. While a number of considerations go into this selection, many of which are particular to the individual survivor, their preferences, experiences, and skills, there are broad considerations applicable to most every case. This is especially true in the negative; there are some forms of art, some art-formation practices, and some artists that are simply not well-suited for therapeutic engagement. As was discussed in our chapter on the aesthetic framework, only a subset of all art was under consideration. Some art is intentionally random, created not simply without a message in mind, but with the aim of being messageless. Other art is created with the expressed purpose of confusing or misdirecting those who participate in it. Some art is created to harm. Other art is

harmful precisely because of the message it was created to convey. While this is not the space to discuss the value, moral or aesthetic, of such art, it perhaps goes without saying that such works are not suitable for therapeutic engagement. While Raymond's experience of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* included a recognition of its manipulative power and use as exploitive propaganda, the therapeutic value arose when that reality was clearly expressed and understood.[2]

Care should be taken when considering works of art, recognizing the important duty to first do no harm. Certain avant-garde artists seek to shock their audiences, while others find aesthetic pleasure in surprising participants. When considering the trialogue of the therapeutic social practice, such adversarial voices rarely prove to be therapeutic. Likewise, those artists that create art in order to deceive others about the artist themselves or to project a false image of themselves, are not well-positioned for the type of authentic meeting envisioned by the practice. Caregivers should take a conservative approach, to ensure that the works they present for therapeutic engagement do not become themselves sources of trauma. While it may not be appropriate to consider trauma survivors fragile, a gentle approach is generally preferable, especially when one considers the significant power of art to affect its participants. During the course of pastoral care, it is also possible for the caregiver to assess the survivor's reaction to different works of art, determining what may or may not be helpfully incorporated.

Closely related to the possibility of art to inflict further trauma is the certain possibility that works of art can serve to retraumatize survivors. It should go without saying, and will be explored in greater depth shortly, that the therapeutic social practice of art is not an introductory exercise; it requires a developed relationship between caregiver and survivor and a robust understanding of the trauma or traumas in play. The caregiver should have a full or nearly full

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[2] Later, we will discuss how framing a work of art, situating it within it sitz im leben and identifying its political purpose, can be helpful in the context of therapeutic engagement.

understanding of the survivor's story before considering incorporating art. At the outset, the caregiver should be careful to select works that do not directly address the trauma the survivor experienced. While at later, more advanced, moments such artwork may prove helpful, initially such artwork should not be employed. Pastoral caregivers should be open to the reality that many religious symbols, religious symbolism, and religious language hold the potential to retraumatize. Gruesome depictions of Christ's torture and execution, symbolism that involves blood or sacrifice, and language that emphasizes the spiritual benefit of such pain and brutality may prove triggering. This is not to discredit such art in itself, but to recognize that survivors of trauma are in a vulnerable position.

How Does One Select the Art or the Style for Therapeutic Engagement?

In the language of the aesthetic framework, the selection of a work of art for therapeutic engagement is akin to inviting a new voice into the conversation. It may well be the case that a plethora of voices have already been heard, but selecting the work of art represents an opportunity for the caregiver to choose that voice, perhaps for an intended purpose.[3] The power of that art to shape the conversation, and indeed to shape the course of the survivor's recovery, should not be underestimated, and so the selection of art should be undertaken with the greatest care and reflection. How one, as the caregiver, goes about the process need not follow a rigorous pattern or strict structure, and may progress in different ways under differing circumstances. In some instances, a particular artist may be the starting point, while in other circumstances a

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[3] The question of whether the caregiver should select a work of art with an intended message in mind is somewhat fraught and will be considered later in greater detail. The fundamental point is that the survivor must hear from the art / artist and the caregiver should not project their opinion or view of the art. That said, most works of art are not such wax noses that they can be shaped into anything, and the range of possible interpretations should certainly inform the caregiver's selection.

particular style may surface in the course of pastoral conversation, pointing to therapeutic possibilities.

A helpful first step in the process of selection can take place during conversation. Through the use of prodding questions, the caregiver may explore the survivor's attitude towards art in general, specific forms of art, or particular artists. A survivor may mention works of art that have impacted them or are important to them. Numerous indicators can arise in conversation that the caregiver can take note of and return to in time. Works, provided they are safe, that hold some sort of personal meaning, have a place within the survivor's history, or resonate with their narrative are all good options, especially as an entrée into the therapeutic social practice.

Another potential starting point can be the selection of a particular style. Again, conversational indicators may point to the possibility; a survivor may reference music or poetry or mention how important dance or painting was to their story. Other indicators of potential suitability may be more subtle. By way of negation, an individual who demonstrates aural sensitivity may not find music to be the best option while those with limited reading skills may struggle with poetry or other written works of art. Survivors who demonstrate a capacity to visualize internally may, on the other hand, find poetry to be a suitable style. Likewise, those with a natural inclination towards harmony may benefit more from music. Those who display a tendency towards abstract thinking may find engagement with modern styles of sculpture more enriching than more concrete thinkers. Engaging therapeutically with art may allow survivors to exercise art appreciation skills previously developed, but it is not an ideal time to develop those skills. Building upon an existing foundation offers the greatest opportunity for success.

Relevant to this discussion is the observation that artistic style does not define the message the artist conveys. While the language one speaks certainly shapes and influences the

information conveyed, that language is not determinative. A particular language may be more or less suitable to particular messages, but caregivers should not limit the possibilities of particular styles. That said, the emotive force and pace of communication is substantially impacted by style. Music or visual arts may prove to have a greater emotional impact, or certainly a more concentrated emotional impact, than a novel or epic poem. Exercising appropriate pastoral discernment, the caregiver may determine that a particular survivor may be more or less responsive to such heightened emotional moments or may find the slow burn of a novel more beneficial. Similarly, those survivors who have demonstrated limited patience may respond well to the immediacy of a painting, and struggle with the extended experience inherent to a lengthy work of orchestral music.

Studies aimed at determining a relationship between personality and aesthetic preference have a long history, and the psychology of aesthetics remains a robust field of study (Swami & Furhnam, 2014). These studies, however, are largely inconclusive, with many pointing in contradictory directions, in no small part due to the complexity of both personality and artistic experience.[4] The most supported claim, and worthy of acceptance, is that openness to experience is the only one of the Big Five personality traits to have significant aesthetic relevance, and that relationship is more a matter of general preference for art, or an artistic personality, than any style or era (Swami & Furham, 2014). More recent studies have suggested that in addition to openness to experience, an individual's age may also serve as a substantial predictor, with younger persons showing a preference for cubist or Renaissance painting (Chamorro-Premuzic et

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[4] One might also add that the relative lack of sound data supporting different constructs of personality, and an only moderate level of agreement over what constitutes personality, may also contribute to these broadly inconclusive results.

al., 2008). While theoretical arguments have been offered to substantiate claims of preference based on gender identity, good studies in support of such arguments are in short supply.

This becomes relevant in the selection process, insofar as personality indicators may prove helpful in selecting a particular work of art. Those who are more open may respond more positively to nonconventional or abstract art, while more closed individuals may prefer impressionist or more realistic visual art (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2008). It is important to remember, however, that a preference for a particular era of painting or style of music doesn't not necessarily imply that such a style or medium will be most therapeutically beneficial. Certainly, it makes intuitive sense that a work of art that is more aesthetically pleasing makes engagement easier, or at least motivates the participant to engage more readily, but even that does not necessarily predict that such an engagement will result in therapeutic benefit or even learning (de Botton & Armstrong, 2013).[5] Perhaps more effective than a general approach is to lean on what may be determined therapeutic judgment on the part of the caregiver. Bringing together all that is known of the survivor, including experiences, personality, context, situation, expressed preference, and age, caregivers can make an educated guess about which style, medium, or artist may most effectively serve as a conversation partner.

Caregivers who facilitate therapeutic engagement with art need not be experts on the art itself or aesthetics generally. However, as the caregiver selects art, it can be helpful if they are familiar with the voice, or language-game, of the artist(s). A caregiver who takes the time to participate themselves in the work selected also places themselves in a privileged position. That is not to say that a piece, or an artist(s) through a piece, will communicate the same message to the caregiver as the survivor, but experience with the work, its details, and the nature of its

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[5] This suggests a need for research regarding the therapeutic benefit of art participation, perhaps comparing personality factors to positive benefit in order to determine potential relationships.

content can allow the caregiver to sit in a more confident and informed position as they facilitate the survivor's engagement. One underlying assumption of the aesthetic framework comes to the fore in this context. The framework assumes that the meaning of a work of art is the product of a genuine meeting between the participant and the art / artist(s). Any objective meaning expressed by the artist outside of the context of a particular meeting, if such a meaning exists, can serve as a helpful starting point, but the caregiver should maintain an openness to an alternate interpretation on the part of the survivor. Simply put, the meaning of a work for the caregiver, may differ significantly than the meaning for the survivor. Likewise, the meaning of a work may be different across time; what a work means now may not be what it means in the future. Therefore, the caregiver must take care not to assume or project meaning. That warning heeded, familiarity with the language and voice of a work can place the caregiver in a position to aid the survivor in their production of meaning, in in debriefing, perhaps utilizing that language as an element in the emergent theopoetics.

As a caregiver employs art in their pastoral counseling, certain works will prove to be more accessible for survivors of trauma. Likewise, certain works will evoke certain responses, prodding reflection in particular directions, or surfacing specific truths. Without forcing such interpretations or framing the work in a way that requires such results, the caregiver can begin to employ these works to further therapeutic aims. Surprises may happen, but generally within a limited range, which may prove beneficial as the survivor works towards healing. Indeed, a caregiver may develop a catalog of works that form a resource for their pastoral care. Similarly, certain collections of art may prove fruitful. Robert Palmer employs two helpful techniques, inviting clients to page through books of art or to flip through decks of art cards, allowing their

subconscious to draw them along (R. Palmer, personal communication, December 14, 2020).[6]

Respecting the need for safety, caregivers can also express their creativity. Even if a survivor does not find a particular work as beneficial as the caregiver hopes, it can remain a productive and positive experience. The aesthetic value, or perceived beauty, or a work of art can also be leveraged in this context. Those works that are more evidently aesthetically pleasing tend to serve more effectively for those who are just beginning to gain experience in therapeutic engagement.

A final option in selecting a particular work, or artist, for therapeutic engagement, is to invite suggestions or selections from the trauma survivor themselves. In one possible scenario, the caregiver can offer psychoeducation related to the therapeutic social practice of art and a rough framework for understanding which works may be most suitable, before asking the survivor to select some possibilities. Of course, an immediate answer would not be necessary. Alternatively, the caregiver could approach the subject in a more informal manner, inviting the survivor to share some works of art that have been meaningful to them or works that they may be interested in investigating more closely. Whether or not the caregiver casts the practice in therapeutic terms is best determined by the nature of the relationship, immediate goals, and the level of rapport established between them.

Can Other Social Practices of Art be Adopted as Therapeutic?

Social practices of art are discrete, but related, and may enjoy what can be termed family resemblances with one another, a la Wittgensteinian language games (Wittgenstein, 1953).[7]

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[6] Dr. Robb Palmer, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Ordained Minister and professor, utilizes the medium of art in his therapy contexts, doing so both as a clinician and an educator, incorporating actual paintings, books and/or decks of art cards in his work, and finds it helpful in ways explored in this project.
[7] This is to say that social practices of art may resemble one another in a variety of interconnected ways, not all of which are immediately obvious and which cannot be reduced to any particular similarity.

Thus, as Wolterstorff observes, it is more accurate to speak in the plural of social practices (Wolterstorff, 2015). Therapeutic social practices of art are no different, and bear family resemblances with a variety of other social art practices, but are not identical to them. Similarly, as has been argued previously, other social practices of art may have therapeutic benefits, but because those benefits are not the primary aim of the practice, those practices are not themselves a member of the therapeutic family. Such philosophical considerations do not, however, preclude the therapeutic use of these other practices. In the case of Carl, his participation in the circle ceremonies of his Native American community was not itself a therapeutic practice of art proper, but, as was detailed in his case study, he reaped tremendous therapeutic benefit from his engagement in those rituals. Likewise, the Orthodox tradition of reading icons (see Figure 8), a practice that is deeply communicative, has been the source of spiritual inspiration and growth for generations. Incorporating such experiences and learning into pastoral care is entirely appropriate and beneficial.

Figure 8

Iverskaya

Note: Adapted from *Iverskaya*, public domain. Retrieved from:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theotokos#/media/File:Theotokos_Iverskaya.jpg.

Furthermore, the practice of therapeutic engagement can inform other social practices experienced in other contexts. A number of the individuals reported that their therapeutic engagement with art in the pastoral counseling office altered the way they experienced art in other parts of their life. Again, this does not transform those practices into therapeutic practices, but can have positive outcomes nonetheless. Ideally, a circle can be created in which the therapeutic social practice informs other social practices, which in turn inform therapeutic

engagement. Just as the work of trauma healing is not limited to the immediate context of pastoral care, so too the therapeutic engagement with art. This circle can be harnessed when introducing the therapeutic social practice of art as well. Drawing parallels can increase the survivor's sense of security and understanding and make the practice feel altogether less foreign.

Environmental Considerations

The effects of the physical environment on healing and therapeutic engagement have been documented for a substantial period of time (Heppner & Pew, 1977). Though these considerations have remained more theoretical, and tangible research has been rather limited, these considerations have produced a number of conclusions that are applicable to therapeutic engagement with art. The literature generally focuses on eight elements of the physical environment: objects within the space, room layout, lighting, color, scent, sounds, temperature, and visual or tactile texture (Pressly & Heesacker, 2001). Using Pressly and Heesacker as a guide, we will consider each of these elements in turn, with a specific consideration of how they may enhance therapeutic engagement with artwork.

A caveat on the incarcerated environment is in order in this context. Most caregivers who work behind prison walls have little control over some of the major elements of the physical environment. Security is always the greatest concern and creating a space in which the caregiver has a ready avenue of exfiltration and in which items that could potentially become weapons are removed must be the highest priority. The ability to purchase furniture is often limited, and arrangements within the office must allow for sight lines, as security monitors all that happens in the prison. Lighting and color are often determined by a maintenance department that is more concerned with efficiency and cost-savings than with therapeutic benefit. Temperature is likewise adjustable only within certain ranges. Prison is a loud place, and religious service areas

are often no different. Prisons also come with a particular set of scents, none of which can be described as pleasant, but that are always present. Prisons are changing, but for a vast majority of those working within an incarcerated environment, they have grown accustomed to the functional aesthetic, filled with rough textures. Prisons are buildings of steel and cement, filled with hard and unforgiving angles. All of these elements combine to shape the physical environment of incarcerated caregiving, and while limiting, they do not eliminate the possibility of shaping the environment to support healing.

Objects

According to Pressly and Heesacker, objects within the counseling space, including artwork, photographs, and plants, can serve as a demonstration of the caregiver's personality, increase feelings of ownership over the space, and increase comfort by providing the survivor with visually pleasing stimuli. Each of these factors, if within the caregiver's control, should receive careful attention and thought. Ironically, for those providing care within an incarcerated environment, the sense of ownership that can be reinforced by personalized décor can be reversed by the institutional, drab look of a prison office. Indeed, the presence of cameras and other security apparatus can communicate the lack of ownership or control experienced both by the caregiver and the incarcerated survivor. While potentially off-putting, this shared sense of disempowerment can lead to a sense of solidarity.[8]

With respect to therapeutic engagement with art, the aesthetic environment cannot be overlooked. The experience of any particular work of art includes not only that work, but any other art that may serve to create the total environment of participation (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Therefore, if art is included within the caregiving space, thought should be given to how

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[8] This should not be pushed to any significant degree, however, as most incarcerated persons are quick to point out the manifold inequalities that also exist.

that art will influence the survivor's experience of the presented work for therapeutic

engagement. This may be especially the case when the survivor is reflecting on a piece of music.

In those cases, the survivor is often looking for a place to cast their gaze that is not awkward, and

to settle on a visual work of art is often comfortable. As such, the experience of the visual art

plays a powerful role in the interpretation of the music.[9] Furthermore, artwork, photographs, or

plants may serve to distract the survivor for the piece at hand, limiting the value of the

therapeutic engagement. All such details can form part of the preparatory conversation with

participants, bringing it to their awareness and allowing for organic responses and adaptations.

Color

A number of studies have considered behavioral, psychological, and physiological

responses to an environment's color. While positive emotions are generally associated with light

colors, and negative emotions with darker colors, the lack of variety within a prison setting may

serve to mute such responses (Pressly & Heesacker, 2001). When considering color as a

contextual factor in artistic participation, caregivers should consider the heightened emotional

responses to high saturations of color, seeing such reactions not only as a distraction, but also a

complication to the already emotionally intricate experience of art (Kwallek, Woodson, Lewis, &

Sales, 1997). Neutral colors, on the other hand, may help to create an environment focused on

the art itself, allowing for clarity and sharpening the focused experience of the work. The

interaction of the hue, value, and intensity of color of a particular work and the environment in

which it is experienced will certainly have a bearing on the aesthetic component of visual

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[9] While it would take us rather far afield, a consideration of how the aesthetic framework can be employed to explain the experience of two different works of art, brought forth by at least two different artist(s), simultaneously may prove beneficial. In such cases the voices may compliment each other or contradict each other, creating dissonance or harmony. A careful reflection on the experience may help to elucidate such experiences, but may also be the source of confusion. At least initially, such incidents should be avoided, if at all possible.

experience, increasing or perhaps muting it. Appreciating this can help the caregiver to interpret the survivor's response and experience of the work more accurately.

Layout

As mentioned above, the physical layout of the caregiving space within an incarcerated environment is often outside of the control of the caregiver and must take safety and security factors into careful consideration.[10] Fortunately, some of these considerations only have a slight or moderate impact on the experience of providing care, or may provide greater impetus for a choice that may otherwise appear to be neutral. As Horowitz, Duff, and Stratton (1964) pioneered, the importance of maintaining a body buffer zone is relevant both therapeutically and as a means of maintaining safety. Likewise, survivors of trauma may well prefer a larger buffer zone, a reality caregivers should readily oblige for their own safety's sake (Geanellos, 2003). The preferred intermediate distance of four to five feet is certainly appropriate as a minimum (Lecomte, Bernstein, & Dumont, 1981). While Widgery and Stackpole (1972) demonstrate that counseling across a desk may leave a negative impression on those with elevated anxiety, the additional safety afforded by such an arrangement should take priority within the prison. Layout and furniture considerations for therapeutic engagement do not differ significantly from pastoral care considerations generally. Furniture should be comfortable, even over extended periods of time. The space should be arranged such that visual artwork can be seen clearly and comfortably. As with other environmental factors, limiting distractions to allow for focused attention is the priority.

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[10] The difference between safety and security considerations in an incarcerated environment is a significant one. Safety, as the word suggests, relates to the physical safety of the caregiver as they interact with potentially dangerous individuals. Security considerations, on the other hand, relate to violations of ethics, prison rules, or other legal concerns. As a place of corporate gathering, religious services areas often become places where security threat groups (gangs) and other nefarious actors seek to conduct business.

Lighting

The lighting of the caregiving space, though perhaps unalterable in incarcerated contexts, influences significantly the experience of art. As Kurtich and Eaken (1993) demonstrate, appropriate lighting can aid in awareness of both tangible and intangible elements of an interaction. As artists have employed for millennia, lighting also influences perception of objects and interpretation of subjects (Ching, 1996). In general, soft, full-spectrum lighting is most effective in shaping an environment for engaging with works of art. This consideration should be balanced against the calm-inducing nature of nonuniform, diffuse lighting (Flynn, 1992). A work of art speaks most clearly when it is most easily and comfortably observed, and lighting can help to aid in that endeavor.

Smell

Olfactory considerations for the therapeutic social practice of art generally fall into three categories: memory triggering, distractions, and mood alteration. Smells can trigger intense memories, leading to intense reactions and even disassociation, particular in survivors of trauma (Daniels & Vermetten, 2016). Other research indicates more general psychological responses are possible, with unpleasant smells triggering unpleasant memories (Erlichman & Halpern, 1998). Scent also has power to influence one's mood, both in a positive and negative way (Schiffman, 1992). Pungent odors have a way of grabbing attention, pulling it away from previous objects of consideration. The incarcerated environment is filled with smells, most of which fall on the unpleasant end of the spectrum. However, these smells quickly fall into the background, lessening their acute influence on mood, though prolonged exposure may result in a more general mood dampening. It is helpful for caregivers to recall that their reaction to such smells are likely more intense than the incarcerated survivor's, while remaining sensitive to their

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concerns. Whether it is triggering a memory or inducing distraction, pungent smells should be avoided, while, if possible, light and gentle scents can aid in focus and endurance.

Sound

Unwelcome, distracting, disconcerting, loud, and intense sounds can all serve to detract from the caregiving environment. Intrusive noises can lead to agitation and increase stress reactions, pulling focus away from the therapeutic task. While pleasant sounds may enhance one's ability to engage in non-hearing tasks, they may well hinder effective hearing and internal dialogue (Pressley & Heesacker, 2001). As much as possible, reducing sound problems and introducing pleasant sounds can aid both in the work of healing and in art participation (Venolia, 1988). While introducing music may help to increase a sense of calm, both psychologically (Ragneskog & Kihlgren, 1997) and physiologically (Standley, 1986), the challenge of processing or engaging two works of art simultaneously discussed previously comes into play. Using music to achieve those goals prior to art participation may prove beneficial, but should not continue when art is specifically engaged.

Prison is a loud place, with intrusive sounds occurring frequently. Whether it is announcements over a loudspeaker or the squawk of staff radios, irritating or distracting sounds are the norm. The caregiving environment can provide a respite for those accustomed to the hustle and bustle of life on the housing units, an experience that often includes shouted orders from staff and loud conversation between cells. However, absolute quiet may not be a desirable goal. In prison, as in other environments, absolute quiet can be an indicator that something is amiss or that a potentially dangerous event is about to take place. Incarcerated persons often report a sense of sudden stillness or quiet immediately before a potentially traumatizing event, such as an assault or disturbance of another kind. Avoiding the potentially triggering effect of

utter silence is therapeutically preferable. A low level of sound, from a sound machine, water, or other source, can heighten the survivor's sense of privacy and help to form a helpful environment for engaging with art.

Texture

Incarcerated persons are surrounded by hard, angular, and cold surfaces. From their cells themselves, to institutional spaces throughout the prison, soft and comfortable textures are rarely found. To the extent that it is possible, the incarcerated caregiving space should present survivors with a change of pace. Inviting participants to sit on a chair with a cushion or padding, rather than the hard plastic or metal almost universally found in prison spaces can help to increase comfort levels and a sense of intimacy (Pressley & Heesacker, 2001). Small gestures, such as offering gentle tissues, can also provide the incarcerated survivor with a tactilely different experience from that typically afforded to them. Such actions can help to improve therapeutic bonding and allow survivors to focus on the work of healing.

Temperature

A final element of the caregiving environment is temperature.[11] Ensuring that the space remains within a comfortable temperature range can help to alleviate stress (Bennett, 1977). Offering a survivor the chance to adjust the temperature is an opportunity not frequently extended in prison life, and can increase a sense of ownership over the space. A temperature within a comfortable range will allow participants to focus and minimize distraction. Caregivers in an incarcerated environment can also be helpfully reminded that while the opportunity for them to adjust their clothing to the temperature is almost unlimited, incarcerated persons are only

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[11] While other factors are also relevant in this context, such as relative humidity, incarcerated environments almost never allow caregivers the opportunity to adjust anything other than room temperature or, perhaps, to introduce moving air with a fan.

afforded a limited selection of clothing items, and are required to conform to seasonal prison dress codes. As such, they are unable to simply put on a sweater when it is chilly or choose more lightweight clothing in the summer. Deferring to their temperature preferences can be an act of kindness that not only promotes the therapeutic alliance, but also increases the ability of the survivor to engage with a work of art more attentively.

Incarcerated persons are frequently reminded by correctional staff that they are not in control. They are living in an environment that is not their home, and a lack of creature comforts is part of the punishment they are experiencing. Incarcerated persons are also prevented from any significant experience of variety. The monotonous, grinding similarity of task and environment, played out over the course of years, can serve to dull their aesthetic sensibility. Disempowered and detached from any environmental sources of comfort, the very environment of the prison becomes an enemy (Foucault, 1975). Even small alterations to the environment within the caregiving space specifically or the religious services area generally can result in positive responses. Granting survivors a sense of ownership over the space can help to reduce trauma responses and dramatically improve their sense of comfort (van der Kolk, 1989). Details that can be easily and quickly overlooked by caregivers can stand out to incarcerated persons who are so well-accustomed to the same colors, shapes, and textures. Carving a safer, more comfortable space out of the larger, trauma-tinged, environment can in itself provide therapeutic benefit or, at minimum, psychological respite. This small gift, while objectively beneficial and kind, can also aid in the therapeutic social practice of art.

Situating the Therapeutic Practice within Broader Pastoral Care

Therapeutic Relationship

One assumption throughout this work is that the therapeutic social practice of art has been nested within a broader course of pastoral care. As an assisted practice that focuses on a developed trialogue, the importance of the therapeutic relationship between caregiver and trauma survivor cannot be understated. Engaging with art therapeutically is an act of bravery, and it assumes a level of trust between the caregiver and trauma survivor. The survivor must believe that the caregiver is truly *for* them, sincerely concerned for their well-being and healing (Norcross & Wampold, 2011). The foundation of that trust is a rapport developed over the course of time (J.L. Cochran & N.H. Cochran, 2015). While a detailed consideration of pastoral care is beyond the scope of this present work, certain elements that are critical in establishing therapeutic relationships are worth reviewing. Therapeutic relationships are built over time, as the caregiver engages in active and empathetic listening, offering plenty of feedback to the survivor. A stance that is neither anxious nor judgmental along with genuine and generous expressions of positive regard can help to demonstrate empathy and strengthen the therapeutic connection (Duncan et al., 1999). Consistent presence and care can speak volumes, while including the survivor in decision making and structure-establishing can likewise reinforce the therapeutic alliance (J. L. Cochran & N. H. Cochran, 2015). This includes the choice to incorporate art. It should be a mutual choice, introduced, perhaps, by the caregiver, but endorsed by the participant and grounded in a trusting, hope-infused relationship.

Theoretical Knowledge

If, as has been proposed, the decision to incorporate art is a mutual decision, then it follows that the participant should have an understanding of what therapeutic engagement requires and entails. Survivors ought to make an informed decision. To what extent, however, should the caregiver explain the therapeutic social practice? The answer to this question is largely situational; the nature of the therapeutic relationship will determine how extensive the description of the process should be. The precise terminology of this explanation should be tailored to the survivor.[12] At minimum, survivors should be informed that a work of art, either mutually selected or chosen by one of the partners, will be presented for careful appreciation and participation. The survivor's primary responsibility will be to observe the work and, to the extent that they are able, to participate in it. This participation can be mediated or unmediated. If the participant seems to be struggling, the caregiver can ask prodding questions, serving as something of a tour guide for the work. The caregiver should be careful in such instances, however, to avoid projecting their meaning on the work or shaping too significantly the experience as a whole. Once that participation has come to an organic conclusion, a conversation can unfold around the experience.[13] As survivors grow in experience, it may become appropriate to provide further education or explanation, deepening their capacity to therapeutically engage. Likewise, if the debriefing that occurs following participation incorporates certain elements or terminology related to the process, a fuller discussion of those elements may be in order. Such discussions are certainly not mandatory, and in cases where the exploration of theoretical

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[12] The terminology "participate in" a work of art, though commonplace in academic aesthetic reflection, may initially sound or feel odd to a survivor. Other phraseology may be more appropriate.

[13] The length of time an individual will take to fully participate in a work of art can vary drastically. In the case of music, the time is predetermined, though a participant may ask to listen to the work again or take time to reflect on the experience. In the case of written art or visual art, the length of the experience can be rather unpredictable. The complexity of the work, and the experience of the participant, are two primary factors impacting the duration of participation.

structures, constructs, or concepts would not serve a therapeutic end, then they should be eschewed.

Appropriate Structure

Therapeutic participation in art can be incorporated into a large variety of pastoral care session structures. Caregivers need not adjust the developed structure of sessions too significantly in order to include art engagement. If a caregiver typically begins a session with introductory conversation and "catching up," then a session including art participation should also begin that way. If a caregiver typically begins a session with particular questions or with homework follow up, no changes are necessary. Indeed, allowing the survivor to process what has taken place between sessions can help them to focus more fully on the task at hand. Adjusting the typical pattern too significantly may leave the survivor feeling ill at ease or uncomfortable, at least initially, with the prospect of therapeutic engagement. Maintaining continuity with previous sessions is an important part of sustaining comfort and engagement, and will contribute to positive outcomes (Appleton, 2001). While therapeutic engagement with art may be helpfully integrated with other interventions, caregivers may find it helpful to limit that integration initially. Allowing the art participation to be the focus of the session can allow for a clearer understanding, by both partners, of what has taken place and what therapeutic benefit was gained. This clarity can help to increase motivation and allow for the sharpening of skills.

Leveraging the Background of the Artwork or Artist

It is agreed with Bullot and Reber (2013) that the experience of art is not a purely historical or purely psychological experience. Certainly, brain and other physiological processes are at work when an individual participates in a work of art, such neurological facts are beyond dispute, but additional factors are also at play. As has been delineated previously, sociological,

political, and relational forces also serve to shape participation; practices of art are inherently social. In considering the influence of these forces, one cannot exclusively consider the participant's context. The historical context of the art production, as well as the historical forces influencing the preservation, and the nature of the preservation, of the work are also relevant. As with any communication, the forces at work on the communicator are relevant to understanding the content of the message. Terminology, references, and symbolism can be highly influenced by artist's context, and a knowledge of that context can aid in understanding.

Is such knowledge necessary to participate in the work of art? The answer to that question must be a no. It is entirely possible for a participant to experience, and experience therapeutically, a work of art, while ignorant of all contextual considerations. Bella, for example, had little or no knowledge of Caravaggio's life and context, even if such context was hugely influential on his work. On the other hand, it was precisely the political context of transmission that provided the framework for Raymond's insight into *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Did Raymond experience the poem at a deeper or more meaningful level than Bella? One could plausibly argue that his experience was more informed, but to privilege that experience over and against Bella's would be misguided.[14]

A similar argument can be made when it comes to an understanding of artistic styles and periods. Would a knowledge of baroque art inform Bella's experience of *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*? Certainly! Would an appreciation for the development of jazz music allow for a listener to notice subtle elements of a Billie Holiday performance that others might miss? Absolutely!

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[14] A deep discussion of this is beyond the scope of the present work. However, the assumption that a more informed experience of a work of art is in some way better or preferable to an uninformed experience belies something of an objectivist approach to art that bears a familial resemblance to Wolterstorff's *Grand Narrative*. While a more informed approach may lead the participant to a better understanding of what may be termed artistic intent, the premise of the present approach has been that such communication is ultimately a mutual production, and not solely the creation of the artist.

Those who grow in such knowledge may reflect on their experience and say that their learning has led to an improved experience; their artistic experience is enhanced by that knowledge, improved and enlivened by it, but to step back and objectively privilege such participation would be a mistake (de Botton & Armstrong, 2013).

That said, such historical or stylistic knowledge can be leveraged by the caregiver to alter or enhance the experience of the participant. Information may serve to increase the sense of connection or commonality between participant and artist, which may well aid in communication. Likewise, if particular techniques that may initially confuse an observer are explained ahead of time, the overall experience may be clarified. Works of literature, drama, or cinema may include references or language that require explanation, as any introductory student of Shakespeare could attest. In such instances, providing explanation or education can surely aid in the experience. Such considerations should be balanced against the realization that such framing is an exercise of power that indelibly shapes the participant's experience. This is not entirely inappropriate, the therapeutic social practice does indeed include a trialogue, but any infringement on the free participation of the survivor should only be undertaken when clear therapeutic goals are evident.

The Person of the Caregiver

The final, and perhaps most important, element to be considered is the person of the caregiver. This is to be distinguished from the *actions* of the caregiver, which have been given considerable attention. Rather, it is the *person* of the caregiver, their character, their being, and their being-in-relationship, that plays an important, even essential, role in the therapeutic social practice of art. It is morally questionable, and neurobiologically impossible, for the caregiver to remain a disinterested, objective observer, though historically that has often been a model of

pastoral caregiving (Holifield, 1983). Whether consciously or not, the caregiver is invested in and connected with both the art / artist(s) and the trauma survivor. It is a deeply personal experience that involves the totality of who the caregiver is.

The Power of Authentic Meeting

One undeniable reality of caregiving is that it will always result in changes, not only in the survivor, but in the caregiver as well (A. Ivey, M. Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2010). Heretofore, we have heralded the therapeutic benefits of engaging participatively with art for the survivors of trauma. Facilitating such events, participating with the art, observing and learning the emergent theopoetics, and journeying with trauma survivors will leave the caregiver a changed person. Ideally, this change is a positive one, a matter of growth and learning, and of authentically experiencing an Other. The sense of the Holy's presence which arises in moments of authentic meeting is intended, in this context, for the benefit of the trauma survivor, but that does not discount the positive possibilities for the caregiver as well. Meeting with the Holy is a transformative experience; indeed, Christian tradition speaks of such moments as the most powerful of transformative experiences.

If such an authentic meeting is to take place, then the caregiver must take upon themselves the task of authentic presentation as seriously, if not more seriously, than the trauma survivor. Positioned as they are, it is the caregiver who can model authentic and transparent presentation for the survivor, emboldening them towards the courage needed for such work (Franklin, 2010). It would be both hypocritical, and unkind, to invite wounded persons into a place of meeting, and then demand of them more than is offered to them. Such authentic presentation need not be overwhelming or overburdening, this remains a therapeutic space for the survivor, but the very act of transparent offering, of authentic presentation, is what calls forth

the same from the survivor and invites the presence of the Holy. Likewise, the work of unmasking, removing those false facades and presentations of self, is not only a recognition of another Thou, but an act of modeling and teaching for those who may have found refuge in such protections.

The Power of Attentive Meeting

It should, perhaps, go without saying that one prerequisite for authentic meeting is attentive meeting. To meet with another, one must listen, and hear, them; authentic meeting is happening when all participants feel seen (Franklin, 2010). To limit the practice of listening to purely external considerations, however, is to miss out on the true potential of attentive meeting. Attentive meeting is also a matter of attending to the other out of self-energy (Schwartz, 1999). Some external practices will be here considered, but they should not be allowed to overshadow the conversation that follows, which will take into consideration the internal elements of attentive meeting.

Most any student of counseling or pastoral care has heard of Gerard Egan's (2014) SOLER method. This method of active listening involves five elements, each of which helps to communicate to the conversation partner that one is listening intently and with concern. The first element of this method is sitting squarely. The caregiver should be facing the survivor. Even when considering a work of art, it is possible to sit at an angle so as to face both conversation partners.[15] The second element of this method is open posture, an aspect of body language that avoids crossing one's arms or legs and communicates a readiness to engage. While engaging with a work of art, it is important to focus one's openness to the participant, while not closing one's body to the work of art. The third element is to lean forward, indicating interest in what the

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[15] It is also generally unwise to sit squarely in front of an incarcerated person, as such a positioning may be interpreted as aggressive and challenging.

other is saying and affording them the opportunity to speak at a lower volume if they so desire. While leaning forward is less significant while engaging with art, it is an important element in the pre- and post-engagement debriefing. Likewise, eye contact, the fourth element, is not essential, and perhaps distracting, during therapeutic engagement with art, but is an important part of the active and attentive listening that forms the environment for such engagement. The final element, perhaps the most important for art engagement, is relaxed body posture. Relaxed body language communicates a level of comfort and a desire to remain, both of which are important nonverbal messages to communicate during art participation. Displaying comfort in the midst of the engagement signals to the participant that there is nothing that must be hidden or held shamefully. Expressing a desire to remain affords them the time to experience the art without rushing (Egan & Reese, 2014). Each of these five elements, if they are to be truly effective, must be an external expression of an internal reality, the demonstration of sincere empathy.

Internal Family Systems offers a construal of the inner life that is helpful when considering the inner reality of the caregiver as they meet attentively with a trauma survivor. As the facilitator of the survivor's work, it is the responsibility of the caregiver to be in self-energy as much as possible. Indeed, as the caregiver meets with the survivor's parts, this meeting occurs from self-energy. In these moments of attentive, compassionate, and empathetic meeting, the caregiver can even lend, in a sense, self-energy to the survivor by way of mirror neurons. "Recognizing" the healthy and vital emotive state of the caregiver as they work from self-energy, the survivor's mirror neurons can effect an emotional shift, purely from the act, and experience, of attentive meeting (Schwartz, 1999).

Attending to one's body and self is critical in this endeavor. Internal Family Systems offers eight characteristics that the caregiver can monitor within themselves to determine if they are remaining in self-energy: calmness, curiosity, clarity, compassion, confidence, courage, creativity, and connectedness (Schwartz, 1999). When a caregiver notices such characteristics within themselves, they can be confident that they are operating in self-energy. If not, it is an indication that self-regulation, grounding, or other work is necessary in order to remain attentive in a helpful and healthful way. Likewise, the caregiver's physical body can give indications that they are not in an emotional position to be attentively meeting (van der Kolk, 2014). Even in the midst of conversation or artistic engagement, a caregiver can attend to their body and engage in those internal practices that might bring regulation, groundedness in the present moment, and authentic attention.

Engaging with art can be a stressful experience for both the caregiver and the survivor. For a host of reasons, elements of the artwork can trigger the amygdala of the participants, causing a rush of stress hormones, initiating the fight, flight, or freeze response, and moving them down the autonomic ladder into the sympathetic nervous system (Dana, 2018). At this point continuing with the work of art is both unwise and perhaps impossible. The person of the caregiver, however can mitigate such an event, helping to limit the neurobiological response in a way that would allow a quick return to the artwork. The Social Engagement System (SES) of incarcerated persons is taxed at all times, but in the safe space formed by the physical arrangement of the office, the therapeutic bond, and the presentation of the caregiver, it is possible for it to apply the vagal brake, allowing the survivors stress response to slow and regulation to occur. In those instances when the participant's response is to freeze, the calm but encouraging presence of the caregiver can help to establish the safe conditions necessary to bring

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them back into activity and emotional regulation. In the moment of art participation, the most critical element is the person of the caregiver, communicating through her body language, affect, tone of voice, and other subconscious communication that the survivor is in a safe space, inviting, in a sense, them to neurobiologically match that regulated state (Porges, 2006). Most art participation takes place in an immobilized state, the participant sits and looks or listens. Remaining in a state of immobilization without fear allows the SES to stimulate the production of oxytocin, which can, in turn, result in the co-opting of the neural circuits of the freeze response. This, a result of attentive meeting on the caregiver's part, can promote socially engaged behaviors, including art participation (Porges, 2006).

The Power of Empathetic Meeting

When persons meet, powerful neurobiological forces are at work. Even before conscious thought takes place, the brains of both survivor and caregiver are at work, with mirror neurons working to match the emotional state of one another (Oughourlian, 2016). Even in this moment the person of the caregiver is important, as their perhaps externally disguised emotional state begins to impact both the survivor and the relational dynamic between them. As such, it is integral for the caregiver to attend to their emotional state prior to engaging with the survivor, a reality that must continue throughout the time of pastoral caregiving. Caregivers not only need to communicate empathetically, but must experience authentic, internal compassion (Greason & Cashwell, 2009). In so doing, they exert positive neurobiological influence on the survivor. This also highlights the critical importance of self-regulation on the part of the caregiver. As caregivers work to express and embody empathy, they are impacted by the emotional state of the conversation partner, matching them both physiologically (Marci et al., 2007) and neurologically

(Damasio, 2003). It is only through the act of self-regulation that the caregiver can regain her positive influence.

The experience of art is not a purely cognitive one but involves relational and emotional components as well. It includes physiological and neurobiological responses within the participant, which can in turn influence the caregiver as well. By self-regulating, the caregiver can assist the participant in staying present and attentive to the work, even without saying a word. Caregivers should not be alarmed at the experience; it is not uncommon for one to experience physical responses in the moments of participation: increased respiration and heartbeat, dry mouth, perspiration, or any number of other bodily reactions. These are demonstrations of true empathy, and serve as an encouraging indicator to the caregiver that authentic engagement with the work of art is taking place (Decety & Jackson, 2004).

Empathetic meeting is a healing experience (Cozolino, 2006). Engaging in such meeting and facilitating that meeting with works of art is a sacred task for caregivers, but one that comes at a cost physically and emotionally (Gleichgerrcht & Decety, 2011). The importance of self-care for care providers, then, becomes of utmost importance. Caregivers cannot fake wellness; their neuronal structure will be available to engagement partners every time. To take a purely functional view of self-care, however, would fail to do appropriate homage to the inestimable, even infinite, worth of human persons. The underlying belief throughout this project has been the value of persons: survivors of trauma, the caregivers who attend to them, and artists who bring forth works that can serve as instruments of healing. Such persons are worthy of care.

A Framework for Employing the Therapeutic Social Practice of Art

In this final section, we will consider a broad framework for implementing the therapeutic social practice of art into pastoral care to survivors of trauma. While flexibility should always be maintained, six general steps should be taken. Once the use of art has been incorporated into pastoral care, each step need not be repeated, though steps (4) and (5) should generally not be omitted. The particular character of each step is likewise flexible; each implementation will be as unique as the caregiving relationship into which it is integrated.

Assess the Candidate, the Relationship, and the Environment

The process of including the therapeutic social practice of art should begin with assessment of the candidate, the caregiving relationship, and the environment in which care is typically offered. Contraindications to art engagement were discussed previously, but a more thoroughgoing assessment will go beyond simply determining if a particular survivor is not a suitable candidate. This assessment will include an examination of the survivor's potential openness to art engagement and a determination if there exists a reasonable chance for positive results. Good candidates for the therapeutic social practice should demonstrate a capacity for inner dialogue, insight, and abstract thought.

The caregiving relationship should also be assessed to determine if there is a sufficient level of trust and rapport. While initially a high level of trust may not be necessary, deeper engagement does require a strong therapeutic alliance and concomitant capacity to communicate clearly and effectively. A caregiving relationship in which the survivor feels comfortable enough to express their needs is also an important element. Participation in art is not only a potentially frightening, but also a potentially uncomfortable experience. Especially for those who do not have experience with art more generally, deeply participating can seem "weird" or simply

"different." A caregiving relationship that can handle such emotions is vital, working through them in order to execute the practice and reap the benefits. While some caregiving relationships may never develop to a place where incorporating art is the appropriate choice, this should be seen as the exception, rather than the rule. Caregivers who assess that the therapeutic relationship is not appropriate for art incorporation at a particular moment should continue to assess to see if, as dynamics shift, art can become a helpful ingredient.

A final assessment, which was implied by previous conversation and will be discussed even further momentarily, is an assessment of the environment. Many caregivers are limited to a particular location, and this environment should be evaluated for suitability. A loud, uncomfortable, and distraction-laden environment is clearly not well-suited for art participation. For those caregivers who are able to use multiple locations, each location should be assessed, as some environments may be a better fit for particular styles than others. Even an eager candidate well-connected to a caregiver may struggle within an environment that is not conducive for careful participation.

Determine the Work of Art

The selection of a particular work of art has received extensive treatment already, and will not be repeated here. What is important to note at this stage is the order in which this process takes place. Caregivers should be careful to select a work of art based on a particular survivor. While the caregiver may experience powerfully a work of art, and come to believe that it could be helpfully incorporated into a pastoral care relationship, to *begin* with the art is akin to finding a nice tool, then looking for a project to use it on. As mentioned previously, a caregiver may come to develop a catalog of works that seem especially useful or helpful, but as the caregiver goes about selecting artwork, it should be with the survivor and her needs at the forefront of their

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minds.

Design the Environment and Situate the Practice within your Work

Having selected a work of art, the caregiver will be informed on how to specifically design the caregiving environment for most effective participation. This might be a matter of adjusting lighting so that a visual work can be clearly and comfortably observed. It might be a matter of reducing ambient noise or potentially noisy distractions so that a work of music can be engaged with more effectively. Caregivers should take steps to ensure, to the extent possible, that the survivor will be able to participate with a work of art, situated comfortably and not as the observed. Caregivers engage with the survivor and the work of art, they are not simply observing the participation, and the environment should be arranged such that an equality of parties is on display.

Hand in hand with situating the work of art physically is situating the work therapeutically. For limited art engagement, not a great deal of preparatory work is necessary, but for those occasions when deep participation is expected, the caregiver should prepare the survivor. The nature of that preparation will be determined by the relationship itself, but a certain amount of education and explanation, along with setting expectations, can be helpful. Informed consent, as with all therapeutic practices, is an important prerequisite before moving forward; whether such consent should be formalized in writing or remain verbal should be left to the discretion of the caregiver, as informed by the therapeutic relationship and other contextual factors. Caregivers should also have clear goals in mind, whether or not these goals are expressed to the survivor or not. It would not be particularly helpful or appropriate to engage with art with a wait-and-see attitude. Rather, art participation, like all interventions and practices, should be employed with an articulatable goal on the journey towards healing.

Oversee the Practice

As in all caregiving scenarios, facilitators of the therapeutic social practice of art must simultaneously participate in the practice in an active, attentive, and present way, but also maintain a level of awareness beyond the practice itself. While experienced caregivers have likely mastered this skill, art participation holds the possibility of posing a special challenge. Great works of art have the power to captivate, that is one reason a particular work of art may have been selected and serve as a good candidate for therapeutic engagement, and as such may pull the caregiver into its world as well. It is important for caregivers not to allow their participation in the work of art to become so powerful that it distracts them from the survivor or their caregiving role.

Listen to the Response

The results of therapeutic engagement with art are not entirely cognitive, and they may not be exclusively accessed by one's mind. As participants and facilitators debrief the results of a particular time of participation, the results may well be situated within the survivor's body. They may notice a shift within themselves, in their bellies, their jaws, their backs, or their necks. Participants may simply feel more relaxed, less on edge, or more open to the caregiver and the world. It is not uncommon for participants to become expressively emotional, crying or expressing anger. The immediate response to art participation runs the gamut, and caregivers should be prepared to process these responses, and help the participant to ground.[16]

Listening to a survivor's response to art is the moment of learning. Participants may have learned about themselves, about their experiences, or about the world more generally. They may

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[16] It would be helpful to strategize with the survivor contingency plans prior to engaging with a work of art, were a distressing event to occur. Such plans would include steps to remain grounded in the present, grow in awareness of what the survivor's body is communicating, and identify acute trauma responses.

express insights or they may express shifts in their stance towards someone or something. In the immediate aftermath of art participation, caregivers should actively and reflectively listen, without being too eager to offer their own thoughts. This is not the step for providing explanations or action steps, but rather is a time for collecting, reinforcing, and supporting. This step may well take longer than the participation itself, a reality that should be taken into consideration as the caregiver plans the session. A truncated time for listening may limit the therapeutic benefit of the practice.

Integrate the New Language and Learning

One of the great gifts of the therapeutic social practice of art is the theopoetics that emerges when the Holy saturates the space of authentic meeting, the artist(s) are heard, and all participants feel addressed. If that language remains exclusively within that domain, then a potentially powerful therapeutic tool is not being employed as effectively as it could be. Adopting that renewed language holds the power of transformation. Integrating that language, and the learning it conveys, into the language of the caregiving relationship can signal a major step forward. This final step is not a limited one, but includes the entirety of the therapeutic relationship in light of a particular experience of art. The survivor may need assistance. They may not be fluent, but with a caregiver's encouragement, they may begin to speak the theopoetics of hope and life.

The "Addoli" Method

The framework for implementing the therapeutic social practice of art is flexible, but includes six critical steps:

Assess the candidate, the relationship, and the environment
Determine the work of art
Design the environment and situate the practice within your work
Oversee the practice
Listen to the response
Integrate the new language and learning

Bringing together the first letters of each step, one may refer to this framework as the "addoli" method. English speakers may question if *addoli* is a particular helpful acronym, so please allow for a brief moment of explanation. *Addoli* is a Welsh term, meaning worship. While the addoli method may be utilized by caregivers of all faith and of no faith, those with particular faith commitments may appreciate that incorporating art, like all caregiving, is an act of worship. Christians of all traditions can agree that the Holy is passionately committed to the healing of those who have experienced wounds, and those who commit themselves to journeying with those who are finding healing are truly doing holy work. Incorporating art, with its beauty and power to bring healing forces to bear, is an act of commitment not only to those brave individuals who are recovering from trauma, but an act of faith that the One who is faithful, will meet with them and do the profound work of restoration. The Faithful One will prove worthy of worship, and an attitude of appreciation and even exaltation of that One in humble expectation is surely more than appropriate.

CONCLUSION

I had a few minutes to gather my thoughts and prepare myself mentally as I walked towards the psychiatric observation cell (POC), the sterile and entirely barren space used to house and observe those incarcerated persons who are actively suicidal. Placed in such a cell with only a paper smock, it is a place of degradation and isolation, but also of very limited means to cause harm to one's self. I did not get called down to the POC for social visits, but typically as part of the mandated protocol prior to a manual cell extraction. When I was called down, it was typically because the person inside the POC had decompensated to the point that they needed to be removed and restrained to ensure their continued physical safety. So it was on that particular occasion, when I was called to speak with Morgan Z.

I knew Morgan. She and I had developed a pastoral relationship over the previous few months. As a transgender woman raised in the Roman Catholic Church, she had lived with a conflicted sense of her standing before God. On one hand she desperately hoped that she stood in God's good graces, an object of Divine love, but on the other hand her wounds of rejection and persecution by the very persons who claimed to be people of God spoke a different word. Her inner conflict over her own gender identity had reinforced her sense of rejection, and the culture of the prison had reinforced all of her feelings of self-hatred as she endured abusive language from fellow incarcerated persons and staff alike.

One step forward occurred around the consideration of a painting by Gustav Klimt entitled The Kiss (see Figure 9). Morgan herself provided a worn copy of the painting, taken from a magazine months earlier. The image had grasped her, and it had been the focus of significant attention. She was drawn to it, not as an image of two lovers, but as a depiction of her relationship with the Holy. She saw herself as the female-presenting figure, kneeling before the

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other and embracing him, while in turn receiving a loving kiss. She saw in this moment of connection a loving bond of acceptance and love, an encouraging vision that reminded her that she was not hated and rejected by a tyrannical, judging deity, but was lovingly held. The image arose frequently in our conversation as a reminder of her status before what was most important to her, often a striking and strong contrast to what she was experiencing in the moment.

Figure 9

The Kiss

Walking down the hallway towards the POC, I could hear the conversation between staff that had gathered. A combination of complaints about the task to come and derogatory

statements about Morgan could be heard clearly. She could certainly hear them from the cell she was enclosed in. I was informed that Morgan was uncompliant, unwilling to follow orders. Having smeared much of the window into her cell with fecal matter, staff were unable to clearly see her, and were preparing themselves to remove her, so that the cell could be cleaned and disinfected. Morgan refused to cooperate, and so I had been called in to talk with her, with the hope that I might convince her to do as she was told.

When I approached the cell door, the odor of the feces coating the window was significantly noticeable. When I peered into the cell, I was unable to locate her, but soon realized that she was slumped up against the cell door, out of sight of the window. Sitting down on the other side of the door, I leaned my head against the cold steel of the door and spoke her name. There we spoke for several minutes, never raising our voices much above a whisper. Morgan was in a deeply troubled state, claiming that everyone hated her and that she no longer wanted to live. After a while, I asked Morgan if she felt that I cared about her, caring enough to sit in that wretched space with her and hear what she had to say. Receiving an affirmative response, I asked if she was able to visualize the painting we had discussed so often, and if that might help her to remember that the Holy was there and loved her, too. Through whimpering tears, she did the work she had to do to take hold of that belief (MZ, personal communication, August 23, 2018). It was a profound moment of connection, saturated by the Holy, made possible because of Morgan's therapeutic engagement with art.

Sadly, the penological context of the moment could not be ignored. It was not enough to provide comfort for Morgan. That door was going to be opened and she was going to be removed. The only outstanding question was whether Morgan would comply or resist. Having affirmed that she would comply, the door was opened and two officers approached her.

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Evidently changing her mind, Morgan began to resist, and she was forcibly restrained. Shaking her head furiously and resisting strenuously, she was dragged away. Later that day she was transported to another correctional facility.

Morgan's story illustrates some of the powerful themes of this book. It demonstrates the significant impact the therapeutic social practice of art can have on an individual, not only during the time of engaging a particular work, but later as they reflect on the power of the experience and the learning they received. Morgan's experience also points to the value of human presence and connection, the positive result of authentic presentation and connection, even in the most miserable of conditions (Frankl, 2006). Lastly, Morgan's story is a stark reminder that the work of a prison chaplain always takes place within an environment that not only inflicts trauma, but that leverages that pain to achieve control. Positive work can be done, growth and healing can be achieved, but always within a space of violence and injustice.

In this book, I have worked to demonstrate how art can be a powerful tool in trauma healing within that very environment. Even when almost every element of the context works against it, healing can be found, and the therapeutic social practice of art can aid in that endeavor. This fundamental hope is grounded in the power of authentic meeting and the invited presence of the Holy, saturating the participants and their space of meeting. We have reviewed examples of that, seeing in Raymond, Carl, Bella, and others that through committed work, artwork can prove a helpful tool. The Aesthetic Framework has aided in understanding why and how that participation is helpful in trauma healing, and various practical considerations have been presented. This book in no way claims to be exhaustive, but rather a starting point and an encouragement to those who wish to employ art in their work, to facilitate healing, for the sake of those who have been wounded and the One who invites restoration.

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Appendix A

The Language of Theopoetics

Rather than offering a comprehensive account of theopoetics, I offer the following statements about my conception of the emergent theopoetics of the therapeutic social practice of art:

1. It is a language that originates in the Holy as a form of address and continues as the resonance of that original speech in conversation.

2. It is a language that finds its being through authentic meeting and truthful expression of one's truth.

3. It is a language *about* the Holy and the world, but points to what is ultimately inexpressible.

4. It is a language of faith, because it involves both a passionate commitment and the recognition of cognitive uncertainty.

5. It is a language of love, because in expression there is both a giving and receiving of the authentic self.

6. It is a language of hope, because while grounded in the present, it continually looks to a future that is not fully determined.

7. It is a language that is not static, but ever evolving, just as humans and the holy are evolving, both in being and relationships.

8. It is a language that is not literal, but truthful.

9. It is a language that is not content with being as is, but relentlessly seeks to express what has not been expressed because it has not yet come to be.

10. It is a language that is not tied to a particular sacred text or cultural location but emerges from the persons in conversation.

11. It is a language that is not dependent on intellectual capacity or function, but on presence and attention to the heart.

12. It is language that is not exclusively expressed in words but can be expressed through art and action as well.

Appendix B

The Nervous System

The human nervous system is comprised of three sections: the central nervous system (CNS), the peripheral nervous system (PNS), and the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The brain and spinal cord make up the central nervous system, regulating every bodily activity. The peripheral nervous system includes the nerves that branch off of the spinal cord and form a network throughout the body. It is responsible for connecting all parts of the body to the CNS. Finally, the autonomic nervous system consists of the nerves involved with involuntary organs, such as the heart, stomach, and lungs. It regulates the function of these internal organs and processes such as metabolism and body temperature, along with heart and breathing rates. The ANS is divided into two main parts: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system is responsible, involuntarily and unconsciously, to respond quickly and direct the body when it senses danger. This is often called "fight or flight," now often called, somewhat less pithily, the "flight, flight, freeze, or fawn" response. The parasympathetic nervous system takes over when the danger has passed. It is often called the "rest and digest" system, helping the body return to stasis (Dana, 2018).

Stress responses begin in the brain. When the eyes or ears sense a proximate danger, they send that information to the amygdala, part of the limbic system and area of the brain concerned with processing memory and emotional response. The amygdala interprets the sensory data it is receiving and, if it perceives danger, sounds the alarm to alert the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus is the brain's "command center," passing information to the rest of the nervous system and activating the stress response so the person has the energy and focus to act immediately in response to the threat (van der Kolk, 2014). When the hypothalamus signals to

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the pituitary gland of a clear and present danger, the pituitary gland produces adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), which then activates the sympathetic nervous system, triggering the body to release several hormones, most importantly, epinephrine (adrenaline) and cortisol (Dana, 2018).

When these hormones are released, involuntary body functions change. Heart and respiration rates increase; pupils constrict or dilate significantly based on the available light in the space; digestion slows; the bladder relaxes; and people experience shaking, dry mouth, and hearing loss. Blood is directed away from the torso and to the extremities, readying the body to fight or run. Extra oxygen increases alertness in the brain. Stored glucose and fats flood the bloodstream, supplying the body with immediately usable energy. The blood-clotting system speeds up in preparation for blood loss to keep the person alive. All of these changes happen nearly instantly and imperceptibly. The system works so quickly that people respond to sensed dangers before they are conscious of them being present (van der Kolk, 2014).

After the initial flood of epinephrine passes, the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis takes over. If the threat is still present, the hypothalamus indicates to the pituitary gland to continue to release ACTH and therefore continue to release cortisol. This keeps the system on "high alert" for as long as the brain continues to perceive danger. When the danger has passed, the HPA axis allows cortisol levels to fall. This triggers the parasympathetic nervous system. The vagus nerve, one of the 12 nerves extending directly from the brain and throughout the body, is the longest and most widely-branching cranial nerve. It carries the command from the brain to return to "rest and digest," as well as carrying information from the organs back to the brain. Once the parasymphathetic nervous system releases acetylcholine, the body begins to return to statis. Blood pressure, heart rate, and hormone levels return to normal; digestion and salivation resume; sexual arousal is again possible; and the body comes back into equilibrium. It is

important to note that these changes do not happen as quickly as the fight-or-flight response; it takes the body significantly more time for the "rest-and-digest" response to be fully implemented (Dana, 2018).

In a normally-regulated nervous system, the body experiences stress but returns to stasis when the threat has passed. Traumatic events, however, push the body outside the window of tolerance. One problem of trauma is that when the body cannot fully relax, these stress hormones stay chronically activated, causing changes on the neuronal level. In a chronically-stressful environment, the limbic system and pre-frontal cortex (PFC) change. The limbic system is more sensitive to potential threats and the HPA axis more sensitized to fluctuations in cortisol level. This changes the overall balance of neurotransmitter levels in the brain. In the case of ongoing and chronic stress, such as that produced by the prison environment, the nervous system becomes conditioned to existing in a state of fear. The system gets suck—either in the "on" position or the "off" position. Being stuck in the "on" position means being chronically overstimulated and unable to reach equilibrium. Persons who experience this are often irritable, anxious, restless, and hyperactive. For those whose systems become stuck in the "off" position, fatigue, lethargy, and depression often result (van der Kolk, 2014). With the overall increase of cortisol, the "survival" portion of the brain is chronically activated. This increase in cortisol makes the PFC less effective at responding to situations in a logical manner, and "short-circuits" the hippocampus, making it harder to store memories with a cohesive narrative. Instead, memories are fragmented bits of sensory input that can be triggered over and over by events similar to the previously-encountered stressors. With continued activation, the neural pathways between triggers and trauma responses becomes stronger, such that the system responds with fight-or-flight even when no true danger is present (Herman, 2015).

Appendix C

The Polyvagal Theory

What has come to be termed the Polyvagal Theory began with work by Stephen Porges in 1992 (Porges 2011). This initial research explored the relationship between stress vulnerability and the vagal nerve, specifically by measuring respiratory sinus arrhythmia (Porges, 1992). The promising results of that research lead to a further exploration of the relationship between vagal tone and both respiratory sinus arrhythmia and bradycardia in human fetuses. That study provided seemingly contradictory data. Vagal tone, which Porges had theretofore posited as a positive, could be lethal if its presence was too significant; it cut both ways in what Porges labeled the vagal paradox (Porgex, 2011). This seeming paradox led to additional research and the eventual development of the polyvagal theory, which provided not only explanatory efficacy for fetal cardiovascular responses, but also for a wide range of adult experiences (Reed, Ohel, & Porges, 1999).

The primary research focus that contributed to the development of polyvagal theory was on the phylogeny of autonomic nervous systems in vertebrates. Porges argues that the three distinct phylogenetic stages of vertebrate autonomic nervous systems remain, though are expressed differently, within humans (Porges, 1995). Deb Dana (2018) refers to these subsystems as "pathways of response" to the external environment as well as signals within the body (Dana, 2018, p. 3). The most primitive of these pathways is the dorsal vagal system, a subsystem that is behaviorally linked with immobilization, expressed as an utter relational shutdown, 'playing dead,' and vasovagal syncope (Dana, 2018; Porges, 2011). More phylogenetically advanced than the dorsal vagus is the sympathetic nervous system, which responds with mobilization, a flood of energy in support of fight or flight. The third subsystem,

which is linked with relational connection and social engagement, is the ventral vagus (Dana, 2018). When operating out of this system's responses, individuals are able to effectively communicate verbally and nonverbally, listen, and bond with others (Porges, 2011). Humans have developed both a myelinated and unmyelinated vagus, the latter of which is associated with the more primitive dorsal vagus, while the former helps to form the social engagement system. (Porges, 1995). The Social Engagement System (SES) consists of somatomotor components, involving the muscles of the face and head, and visceromotor components, involving the heart and lungs (Porges, 2007). This system serves to calm the body and mind by inhibiting the role of the sympathetic nervous system and diminishing the output of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (Bueno et al., 1989). The Polyvagal Theory terms this the vagal break (Dana, 2018).

Neuroception is a term originating with Porges and refers to a human's unconscious detection and awareness of threat and danger (Dana, 2018). Utilizing neuroception, the body responds to perceived threats, beginning with the ventral vagal system. If social engagement and interaction is not up to the task of providing protection or felt safety, then the sympathetic nervous system takes control, cuing a fight or flight response. If this response fails to provide safety, then the dorsal vagus takes control (Dana, 2018). All of this activity precedes conscious thought, as Dana succinctly summarizes: "story follows state" (Dana, 2018, p. 35).

Also critical to understanding these responses is the recognition that these neural circuits are neurophysiologically incompatible; two of these subsystems cannot operate at the same time (Porges, 2011). Dana (2018) uses the image of a ladder, with people ascending into the ventral vagal system and descending into the sympathetic nervous or dorsal vagal systems, often multiple times a day. Developing a capacity to navigate the transition between states is an important skill, whether between ventral vagal and sympathetic nervous systems through play or

the capacity to experience awe, elevation, or stillness without descending down the ladder (Dana, 2018). Experiencing immobilization without fear can help an individual to employ neural pathways typically used in fight or flight responses, but in a manner that contributes to emotional regulation (Porges, 2006).

When operating within the ventral vagal system, humans are able to achieve co-regulation, an important state of physical health and emotional well-being. Co-regulation can only be achieved mutually, within relationship, as humans safely bond with one another. These relationships of safety and trust reinforce healthy and helpful responses to the varying stimuli of life. Trauma, on the other hand, disrupts these pathways and patterns, and disrupts one's ability to coregulate and safely connect with others (Dana, 2018). Over time, trauma reinforces negative neural pathways, leading to a quicker descent down the autonomic ladder. Subject to these well-defined responses, survivors of trauma are left in a terrible state, longing for safe connection, but neurologically impeded from taking the necessary states to establish such relationships.

Movement up and down the autonomic ladder is not a conscious choice, though consciously chosen actions can contribute to movement on it. As individuals develop their capacity for introspection, they can begin to formulate maps of their inner life, helping them to gain or maintain perspective on their current state, potential triggers, and resources that are available to reestablish regulation (Dana, 2018). Understanding the neurobiological underpinnings of one's emotional life can be helpful and a source of calming. In the paragraphs that follow, we will consider a hypothetical incarcerated person, Aiden, and attempt to consider the polyvagal system "from the inside."

Aiden recently pled guilty to a felony and was sentenced to a term of incarceration in state prison. After packing his meager belongings, Aiden is strip searched, shackled, and

transported to county Sheriffs from the county jail where he had previously been held during trial to a state prison. Upon arriving at the prison, he is once again strip searched, handed a basic issue of uniforms, given an introductory briefing related to the policies and regulations of the prison, and likely housed in the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU), home to those serving terms of solitary confinement either for disciplinary or protective reasons. The RHU is a loud and aggressive environment, filled with shouts, banging, and conversations with staff, which are easily overheard by other incarcerated persons and quickly become fodder for conversation and interrogation. Individuals held in the RHU are often held twenty-three hours a day, and are escorted to individually caged yards or showers.

Rapidly introduced to this environment, Aiden's amygdala was overwhelmed by all of the new information and experiences, many of which involve perceived and legitimate threats. Knowing the experience of new incarceration, more tenured incarcerated individuals often prey on such anxiety and fear, stoking them and seeking to manipulate. Confronted with such stimuli, Aiden's SES and ventral vagus almost assuredly lacked the capacity to provide regulation. He felt a rush of adrenaline, and an almost overwhelming desire to fight or flee. Sadly, in his shackled and controlled state, Aiden could only comply with the directions of correctional staff who forced him into a solitary cell. Unable to get away, Aiden descended further down the autonomic ladder into the dorsal vagal system, shutting down physically and emotionally. When engaging with individuals in such situations, staff often report that they are sleep walking or simply going through the minimum motions necessary to sustain life.

Following a brief period in the RHU, Aiden would be assigned a housing unit in general population. In an effort to forestall suicide attempts, Aiden would likely be paired with a cellmate, or cellie. The experience of such a cell block is radically different from the RHU. In

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addition to the presence of another human being, there are expanded freedoms: the ability to engage in social activities with others in the day room, make phone calls, send emails, make purchases from commissary, and to participate in Institutional programming. Aiden would need to leave both his cell and housing unit in order to access medical care or eat meals. Surrounded by individuals, he would be introduced both to fellow incarcerated persons and to the full variety of prison staff, including activities specialists, educators, medical and psychological professionals, and chaplains.

The period of integration onto a housing unit is critical for incarcerated persons. Still surrounded by new experiences and the constant potential for danger, many initially remain in their cells, communicating only with staff and their cellie. These interactions can prove positive and fruitful for Aiden, allowing him to ascend up the autonomic ladder. However, operating out of the sympathetic nervous system can prove problematic for incarcerated persons, whether new to prison or not. They may well experience an influx of energy as the fight or flight response is triggered. Given greater freedom, the opportunity for a semblance of flight is possible, but discouraged by prison rules and incarcerated culture. Fighting, on the other hand, while a violation of prison policy, is acceptable within incarcerated culture. Unable to flee, Aiden may feel compelled to fight, even if that is outside of his prior-to-incarceration personality. Incarcerated persons often report fighting, or other forms of resistance, as important elements of their newly incarcerated story.

If Aiden manages to stay out of trouble, opportunities for safer connection will present themselves. Whether it is within the religious services department, education department, by participating in formalized therapeutic groups, or by joining activities (both individual or team), Aiden will have the opportunity to experience immobilization with limited fear. He may even

forget his fear while in the midst of a particularly engaging experience. Likewise, increased communication with loved ones on the outside, including in-person visitation, may afford Aiden the opportunity to operate within his ventral vagal system. During these times, Aiden may feel a sense of connection and bonding, or awe in the face of an Other, along with a euphoria that was perhaps forgotten. Such is the positive fruit of ascending the autonomic ladder.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that Aiden will be able to spend a significant amount of time operating out of the ventral vagal system while incarcerated. The daily routine of prison involves many activities that are potentially dangerous and can trigger stress responses. Even the acts of eating meals or receiving medications can be filled with potential dangers. At several points in each day, Aiden will be forced to stand for count, and at no point is he in control of his schedule and only ever enjoys a limited control over his physical location. Integrating into prison culture is never complete, it is a constant exercise of relational and emotional flexibility with incredibly high stakes. Violence is a reality, whether perpetrated against Aiden's person or against those he is in close proximity to. As such movement up and down the autonomic ladder can be swift and disorienting, contributing even further to the sense that life on the inside is out of his control. This is not to say that incarcerated persons are without hope. While movement up and down the latter can be indeed disorienting, it is possible to find a balance between the systems. This balance is admittedly different from those living in less stressful and trauma-inducing environments, but can provide an incarcerated person the regulation necessary to meet the challenges of prison life.

Appendix D

The Internal Family Systems Theory

Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a theory developed by Richard Schwartz. In developing this theory, Schwartz attempted to apply systems thinking to intrapsychic processes, while also utilizing techniques from family therapy (Dick & Yalom, 2009). The heart of the theory is a concept that Schwartz labels the Self, an understanding of the person that holds similarities to certain conceptions of the soul, but also incorporates unique concepts and characteristics. In addition to the self, the intrapsychic ecosystem includes parts, all of which are unique, but can be categorized into three groups. Well-being is characterized as integration, a state in which individuals have access to the Self, live in a state of Self-leadership, and are able to heal and transform their wounded parts (Dick & Yalom, 2009). Dwelling in this state of Self-leadership involves certain characteristics and even the possibility of sharing Self-energy with others (Schwartz, 1999). Self-leadership, then, is not only critical for healing from trauma, but also essential for the caregiver (van der Kolk, 2014).

In IFS, an individual's intrapsychic reality is composed of three types of parts: exiles, managers, and firefighters (Dick & Yalom, 2009). Parts are "not just a passing emotional state or customary thought pattern but a distinct mental system with its own history, abilities, needs, and worldview" (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 281). Exiles are the product of trauma, created out of traumatic events and trapped in that state. They know only what was known at the time of trauma, equipped with the skills available at that time, and without a knowledge or understanding of the self, as it has developed subsequent to that trauma. Often, individuals are unaware these exiles even exist (Dick & Yalom, 2009). Managers exist to protect the self from these exiles, keeping then hidden, and are often quick to maintain order through control. Firefighters, on the

other hand, respond when exiles are triggered, and work to contain them, regardless of the psychic or relational cost (Dick & Yalom, 2009).

While it may not be evident to a trauma survivor, the purpose of these parts is to protect the self, an ultimately loving and positive objective (van der Kolk, 2014). Problems arise when the Self is unable to provide proper leadership or an accurate vision of the internal system. This primarily takes place through a process labeled blending. Blending takes place when the Self is unable to disconnect from a part and begins to identify with it (van der Kolk, 2014). In such a state, an individual loses access to the full array of resources and skills that are available to their fully-developed and mature Self. Unblended and in leadership, the Self fills the individual with Self-Energy, a state characterized by curiosity, compassion, calmness, confidence, creativity, courage, connectedness, and clarity (Schwartz, 1999). Undamaged by trauma, the Self is capable of reorganizing the parts and establishing a peaceful and hopeful system (van der Kolk, 2014).

A number of characteristics of this integrated system under Self-leadership are important to observe. First, parts do not cease to exist. They are permanent parts of an individual's intrapsychic reality, but they are capable of growth and healing (Dick & Yalom, 2009). In practice, this means managers take on differing roles from the ones in which they previously operated. Likewise, the way that an individual sees their parts can develop and change over time, as they come to love their parts, appreciating that though they may have, in their attempt to avoid pain, caused personal pain and relational challenges, their ultimate goal was protection. A person living out of Self-Energy and under Self-leadership will welcome all of their parts, and all of the emotions associated with those parts. This includes exiles. Though they are often hidden, and may have been hidden for considerable time, exiles can lead an individual into greater intimacy and connection with themselves and others.